

Week ending March 14 1953 Every Wednesday Fourpence

# JOHN BULL

## COMMANDO!

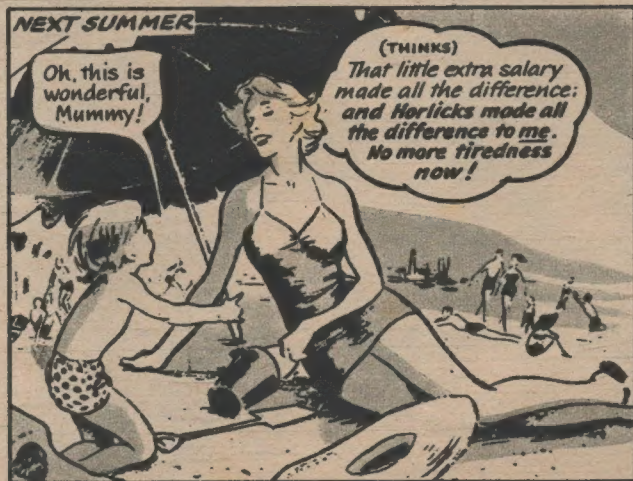
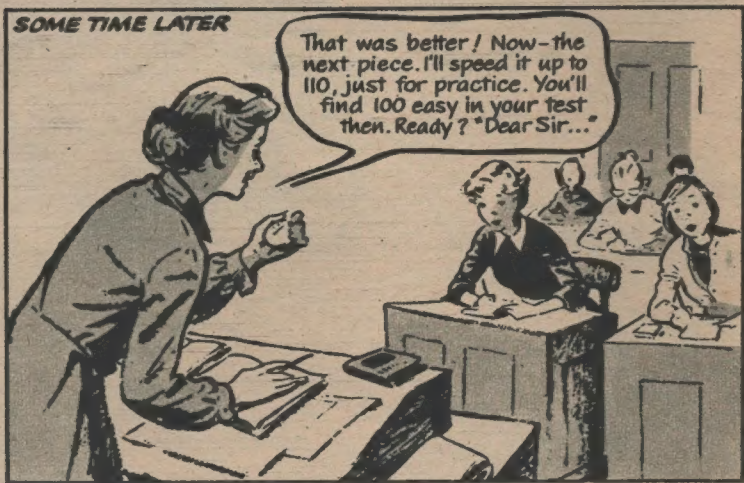
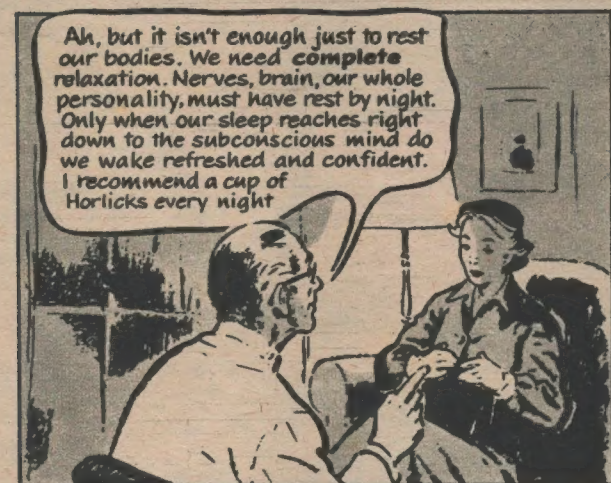
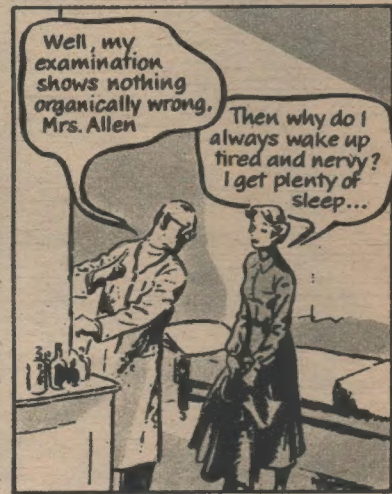
Exploits of the War's  
most daring soldiers,  
by the man who led them

Brigadier  
JOHN DURNFORD SLATER, D.S.O.

PILGRIMAGE TO LOURDES  
by Dennis Holman



# Dear Sir...



**"IF YOU COULD SEE YOURSELF ASLEEP..."**

"HAVE YOU ever watched people asleep? Some look blissfully peaceful. Some seem worried. Some seem tense.

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## EDITORIAL

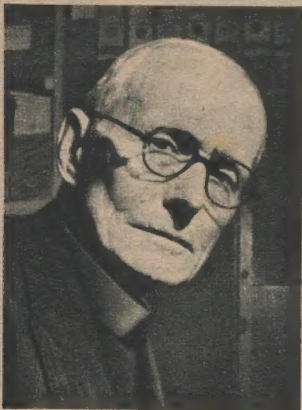
### £ s. d. of 1-2-X

EVERY week during the football season, ten million people stake an average of between three and four shillings a week on the pools. In 1952, £66 million were spent this way, £8 million more than the previous year.

Where does the money go?

Only half of it comes back to the punters in the form of prizes. Of the remaining ten shillings of each pound, six shillings goes to the government in pools betting tax, 3s. 1d. in costs. This leaves elevenpence as profit.

THIS means that Littlewoods, who control fifty per cent of the pools business, must have made a clear profit of more than one-and-a-half million pounds last year out of 1-2-X-and-o. Vernons must have made three-quarters of a million, and the rest of the profits were shared between thirty-two other firms.



REV. MR. GIBSON  
Should change his attack

Yet how the pools are run, how far they are a monopoly, and how they apportion the winning money, are just some of the mysteries of pools operation.

The Rev. J. Clark Gibson, secretary of the Churches' Committee on Gambling, says: "They are a dangerous dictatorship using money entrusted to them by the public to create further incentives to gambling. They have become

a monopoly by sweeping out 197 small competitors in four years."

The big promoters blame the thirty per cent tax for the elimination of competition. They deny charges that there are trading arrangements between them.

FILLING in the pools is a popular pursuit, which will continue to flourish. A few people win and everybody else dreams of winning.

Mr. Gibson and other well-meaning people should face this fact and change their line of attack. The one real evil in our football pools system is that the promoters do not publish their accounts.

Some years ago the Royal Commission on gambling recommended that "any firm which conducts this type of gambling should state publicly to what purposes the money staked by the public is devoted."

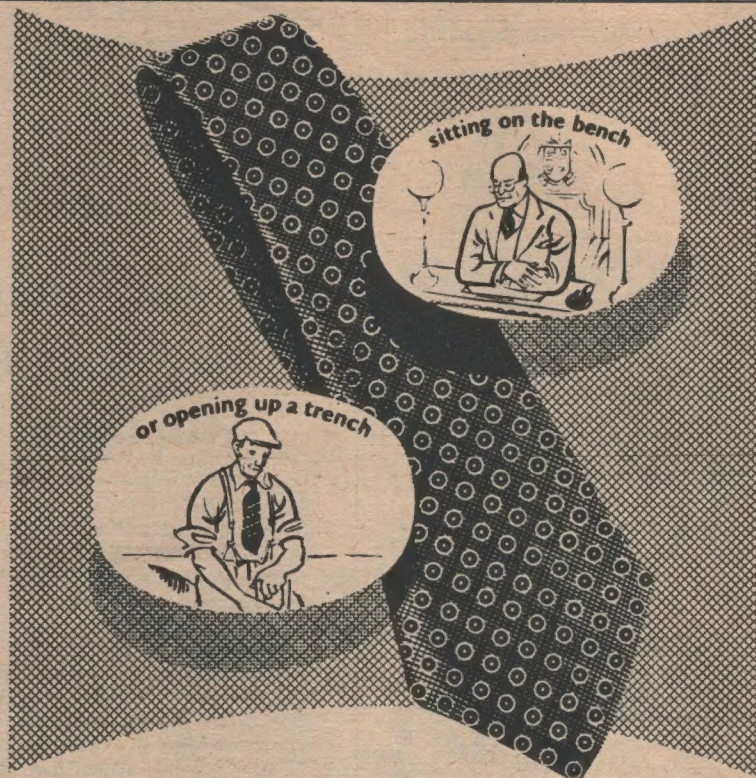
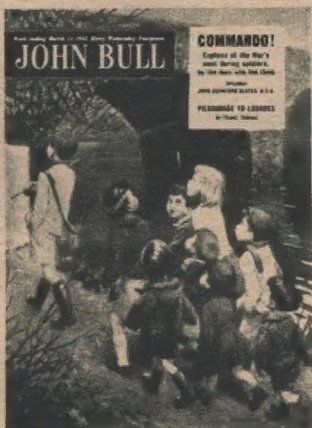
WHILE some of the Commission's other recommendations may lead to argument, everyone will agree that the public should know what happens to all the cash.

Everyone, that is, except the pools promoters.

And the public has a right to expect some Parliamentary action on this long-delayed reform—before next season.

## THIS WEEK'S COVER

DOUGLAS MAYS painted this picture after a JOHN BULL reader in Shrewsbury wrote to him about an admiring little procession he had seen by the River Severn. The young angler's catch may not be a good advertisement for a famous fishing river, but even boys with bent pins dream of fierce tussles with salmon, and whopping catches of perch. And—who knows—there's always a chance of beating the record 24 lb. 9 oz. pike caught at Shrewsbury Weir.



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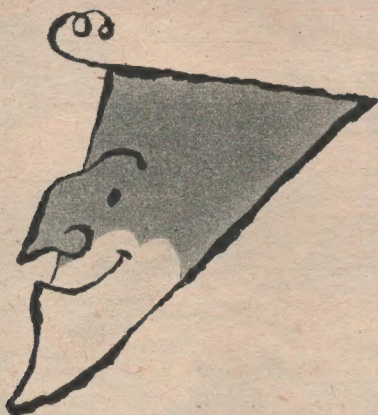
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MARCH 14, 1953 Vol. 93 NUMBER 2437 PHONE: TEMPLE BAR 2468 GRAMS: HEROICALLY, WESTCENT, LONDON

## FREE SPEECH

### Four men who learnt to mow

THREE friends and myself once sat down and planned our lives. One boy was going to be an explorer, another wanted to fly, and the third was set on being a shipbuilder. I wanted to be an artist. One thing we had in common: none of us was going to get married. Marriage consisted of babies in prams and mowing the lawn on Sunday afternoons—and there was no adventure in that. But ambition plays strange tricks.

The "explorer" became an engineer, and was sent to a remote part of East Africa, where he built a harbour. Returning home, he vowed never to leave England again. The "pilot" did become a pilot, and spends all his spare time running a miniature railway in his back garden. The "shipbuilder," who loved the sea, is a draughtsman, and has never even seen a ship launched. I became a surveyor and now I draw, not pictures, but maps. We still have one thing in common. We all married before we were thirty. We all have children and, invariably, when the weather is fine, mow our front lawns on Sunday afternoons.—E. J. M., Sussex.

#### Ordered In Ones

IN a Devon village post office I asked for a sixpenny postal order. The ancient postmaster informed me that he had just sold it.—H. G. GREEN, Totnes, Devon.

#### What's Normal?

THE B.B.C. are not being very thoughtful when their weather forecasts include the phrase "the temperature will be normal for the time of year." In our climate, when every year is either wetter, hotter, or colder than the hundreds which have gone before (and usually when least expected), how can the meteorologists say that we have a normal temperature for any time of the year? I notice that they never commit themselves as to what it is.—MRS. V. S. HARRISON, Lichfield Road, Stone, Staffs.

#### One Exciting Life

SOME women are house-proud to extremes. I have a friend who is an inspector of electric meters. He visits dozens of homes every day, and the shocks he gets have nothing to do with electricity. One housewife requested him to remove his boots before entering her house to read the meter, and refused to let him in until he had done so.—W. C., Belfast.



#### Kitchen Views

WHEN our bungalow was being built it was not the architect who placed the kitchen in the front ("Free Speech," February 21), but my wife and I who insisted upon it being there for the housewife's comfort. My wife is much happier working in the front kitchen than she used to be in

our old home, where the kitchen was at the back.—R. D. B., Lancs.

... I don't agree with your correspondent who says that the architect deserves a medal for putting the kitchen at the front of the house facing the street. I have lived in a house of this type for years and find that, apart from the fact that the windows always look a mess through being steamed up, people passing, and my

IN JOHN BULL NEXT WEEK

**JACK HAWKINS**  
by Wilfred Greatorex

START OF A NEW  
POIROT THRILLER BY  
**AGATHA CHRISTIE**

See Page 22

neighbours across the road, think we are inquisitive and always watching them, as we naturally spend so much time in the kitchen.—MRS. A. BELL, Northenden, Manchester.

#### Sergeants' Brew

YES, as the War Office says ("Free Speech," February 21), teapots are issued to sergeants' messes. I was once a sergeant and our mess had a teapot. The tea was made in some secret place in the camp, and an orderly hurried up to the back door of our mess with a pailful. He then filled our teapot from the pail.—L. E. J., Walton-on-Thames, Surrey.

#### Waterloo Postponed

THAT girl looking scared in the background of Douglas Mays's cover of the hockey-playing schoolgirls (JOHN BULL, February 21) could have been me—if she had worn glasses. I was a dreamy girl and, not being athletic, my main concern during hockey was to conserve my ankles against sharp whacks, and my glasses from being smashed to smithereens. To this end, subconsciously I suppose, I invariably held my hockey stick up, instead of down. This infuriated the games teacher, who called me a "Menace"—whereas, of course, I was acting purely in self-defence. No one could have been more thankful than I after the game was over when I found myself intact.—Miss L. W., London, W.9.

#### Art Of Banking

MAY I put the case for the bank in reply to your correspondent D. R., of Surrey ("Free Speech," February 21), who complained of his bank charges? On a current account these are based on the number of entries or ledger pages used. As the charge to D. R. of six guineas is comparatively high, he and his wife must have made very good use of the bank. The five per cent charge on the overdraft accords with government policy to control inflation by raising the bank rate. A moneylender, other than a bank, would probably have charged thirty per cent for this short-term loan.—BANK CLERK, Essex.

... D. R. will doubtless reciprocate the feelings of the poet Robert Frost, who said, "A bank is a place

where they lend you an umbrella in fair weather and ask for it back when it rains."—C. WINDUST, Welldon Crescent, Harrow, Middlesex.

#### Fine Limit Mining

MANY people who grumble about miners know nothing of the conditions under which we work. For some months I have attended an institute for further education. Two teachers, who know that I am a miner working at the coal face, asked me if I used a micrometer in my work.—T. T., Birmingham.



#### Sensitive Bodies

SINCE I was five I have suffered from hay fever. While I was reading Don Everitt's article on allergy (JOHN BULL, February 21), I felt an attack coming on, and finished the article to the accompaniment of frenzied sneezing.—PETER H. SAMS, Bedford Park, Croydon, Surrey.

... I never had any skin trouble in my life until I bought a primula obconica for the house. I developed an eczema-like rash within a few days. My doctor told me to throw the plant away. Yet my brother has handled these plants for years with impunity.—MRS. GRACE SOUTHAM, Chelwood Drive, Leeds.

... A friend of mine had an allergy which was an asset to us when we were prisoners of the Japanese. If he started sneezing when we worked in the Singapore warehouses it was a sure sign that chocolate was nearby. We always located it, but it never delighted my pal, who could not face it at any price.—C. A. IRONS, Darlington, Co. Durham.

#### Life With A Lion

THE lion in this photograph was a neighbour of ours in Bombay some years ago. He was a most docile



animal, perhaps because his owner was a holy man. But the holy man and his pet were not our neighbours for long. Residents complained of the lion's roaring at all hours.—MRS. R. H., Brighton.

#### After The Floods

MY weekend and summer bungalow near Maldon, Surrey, was badly flooded. Perhaps Richard Dimbleby, who runs JOHN BULL's "Down Your Garden" feature, would give me, and other sufferers, some hints on first aid for the garden.—MRS. M. DOWER, Dagenham, Essex.

A temporary trench should be dug at the lower end of the garden to drain the soil. When digging, ridge the ground so that the rain will wash out the salt. If there is silt on the lawn scrape it off with a spade when dry, and brush into the grass. Do not sow until beginning of April. Carnations and grey-leaved plants do not mind salt. All the cabbage family, spinach beet, asparagus and sea kale will do well.

Letters intended for publication should be as brief as possible and include the sender's full name and address. John Bull pays a guinea for every letter printed. Readers with personal problems should send inquiries (other than medical) to John Bull Free Advice Service with a stamped addressed envelope for reply.

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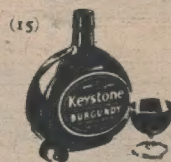
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## RESULTS OF "FITTING PHRASES" CONTESTS Nos. 1, 2 and 3 John Bull, January 31, 1953

SECTION 1. Best entries were those bearing phrases allocated thus:

A 2, B 5, C 3, D 4, E 1, F 6, G 7.

For these entries the following 28 readers share the prize of £50:-

Mrs. Adams, Londonderry; Isabel Anderson, Glasgow, E.1; E. Altree, Portlaid, Brighton; E. Atherton, Farr, Lancs.; J. Bailey, Croydon, Surrey; W. J. Doughty, Bromley, Kent; W. Evans, Higher Irlam, nr. Manchester; Mrs. Edith Field, Ravensthorpe, Yorks; Miss Mary Gillson, Fleckney, Leicester; B. Glendenning, Blyth, Northumberland; A. E. Jones, Holyhead; Daphne A. Jones, Newton, Chester; V. Knight, Weymouth; Arthur A. Leyland, Liverpool 13; J. Morgan, Blandford; V. G. Felt, Croydon; Mrs. Caroline Pitt, Berwick-on-Tweed; Mrs. E. M. Roach, East Barnet, Herts; K. E. Sheppard, Queensbury, Yorks; H. L. Thorn, Hayes, Middx; J. Trodden, Norton-on-Tees; H. J. Viton, Leyton, E.10; E. Watson, Holbeck, Leeds; Miss J. B. Wanku, Llanbrydy, Monmouthshire; J. E. Weekly, Bristol 5; Phyllis A. Winter, Morpeth; Richard Winters, Melton Mowbray; Mrs. M. D. Woodley, Bolton, Lancs.

SECTION 2. Best entries were those bearing phrases allocated thus:

A 6, B 2, C 5, D 7, E 1, F 3, G 4.

For these entries the following 24 readers share the prize of £50:-

F. Aldridge, Winslow Green, Birmingham; M. Bellman, Ripon; K. Bendelow, Thirsk, Yorks; Miss J. Chapman, Kingston; M. L. Cotter, Eastbourne; K. M. Dean, Lowestoft; R. M. Pich, Mansfield, Notts; Mrs. D. Franklin, Accrington, Lancs; G. Hammond, Catford, S.E.6; F. C. H. Harvy, Parkstone; L. Heath, Brockley, S.E.4; Mrs. A. Holland, Monton, Eccles, nr. Manchester; M. Holmes, Weaverham, Ches; Mrs. Marcus, Kidderminster; John R. Milward, Atherstone, Warwick; V. Rawlings, Greenford, Middx; Mrs. B. Richards, Market Drayton, Salop; G. Rudolph, Walthamstow, E.17; C. R. Terry, Darlington; E. A. Thomas, Welshpool; J. W. West, Ilford, Essex; P. Wetton, Chase Terrace, nr. Walsall; Mrs. Wood, Salford 6, Lancs; H. H. Wood, Gedling, Notts.

SECTION 3. Best entries were those bearing phrases allocated thus:

A 5, B 6, C 2, D 1, E 3, F 7, G 4.

For these entries the following 5 readers share the prize of £50:-

Mrs. G. Burton, Walford, Herts; A. Graham, Wivelscombe, Somerset; J. L. Hamersley, Manchester 11; M. P. Killa, Kingston, Surrey; H. H. Wood, Gedling, Notts.

All winners have been notified and cheques have been dispatched

# WE LAUNCH A SNAP ATTACK ON GUERNSEY

Churchill had suggested the raid himself—and he set me a hot pace. Within a fortnight of my becoming the war's first Commando officer, I had to select my men, train them, and go into action

**I**N JUNE, 1940, WHEN I WAS chosen to bring the first Commando unit into being, the Germans were forming up on the other side of the Channel. It seemed that invasion could not be far off. I saw General Sir Robert Haining, then Deputy Chief of the Imperial General Staff. He impressed upon me the importance of forming the Commando as quickly as possible. "You might have to operate in a fortnight," he said.

I was given Southern Command as my recruiting ground. Fortunately, I had had pre-war experience in the selection of Territorial officers. This helped. From volunteers who—like myself—had answered the War Office letter calling for men to raid the enemy coasts, I made my choice. I wanted cheerful officers, not groaners. A good physique was important, but size was not. I looked for intelligence and keenness.

When I found a man I thought would do, I telephoned his former civilian employers in my own time during the evening. I looked for some indication of success, of initiative. I was in a mad hurry, but I had to find

On the fifth trip the dinghy was smashed on a rock. "We'll have to swim for it," I yelled, and struck out into the sea for the launches, now under fire

ILLUSTRATION BY FRED LAURENT





Sword in hand, an officer of the No. 3 Commando leads his troop in a practice beach assault in late 1940. By then they could make a landing in ten seconds.

first-class officers. I visited the headquarters towns of the Southern Command—Weymouth, Salisbury, Oxford, Exeter—to interview the candidates. I travelled and interviewed, interviewed and travelled non-stop: until, finally, I had the officers I needed. Then I sent them out in teams of three to comb the command for other ranks. It took four days to select the men.

My appointment had come on June 28. In the first week of July, I had my unit. By mid-July, we had launched our first operation across the Channel against the enemy. If the pace was dizzy, it seemed exciting at the time.

Looking back, I can see that under such rushed conditions—with no experience and inadequate training—this first operation was foredoomed to failure. Later, the very word Commando was to become synonymous with perfectly trained, tough, hard-hitting, skilled specialists. You don't achieve that overnight.

### Meeting In A Back Street

I remember our first troop commanders' meeting. It was held in the bedroom of a small house in a terrace of a Plymouth back street. I sat behind a bare table. My officers formed a semi-circle around me. They looked good. They were young and keen and fit, and they leaned forward eagerly to listen. "We're going to operate months before anybody else," I said. "It's up to us to make ourselves the greatest unit ever known."

I meant it. Why not? Every man and officer in the unit had been hand picked. We had some of the best brains and the best brawn in the army.

I was called to London to help to plan our first operation. Captain David Niven, the film star, helped to brief me; and I found him lucid, keen and able. The operation was to be a small-scale raid on Guernsey, mainly to capture prisoners and inflict casualties on enemy personnel. It had been suggested by Winston Churchill himself as "exactly an exploit for which the Commandos would be suited."

We knew nothing of what was happening on the island. Accordingly, on July 8, a native of Guernsey named Lt. Nicolle was landed

there by submarine to gather information. He was picked up three days later. The German force, he said, numbered 469; they had machine-gun posts all along the coast; and their main concentration was in St. Peter Port, so that any part of the island could be reinforced within twenty minutes of an alarm.

### The Plan Of The Raid

The plan was that two old destroyers on the night of July 12-13 would carry our raiding force to Guernsey. The force was one troop of No. 3 Commando and No. 11 Independent Company. Our troop was to create a diversion for No. 11's attack on the island's airfield. The destroyers, H.M.S. Scimitar and H.M.S. Saladin, were to be accompanied by six R.A.F. Air-Sea Rescue launches which would take us to our landing beaches at ten minutes to 1 a.m. The destroyers were to wait two hours for us—not an instant longer.

At the last moment the date was postponed until the night of July 14-15. Since we were to sail from Dartmouth, I had breakfast at the Royal Castle Hotel on the morning of the fourteenth. I was excited, naturally, at being on the verge of our first operation—a very secret affair, of course—and it came as rather a shock when I saw my sister Helen sitting at the next table with her husband, Admiral Franklin. Helen saw me and smiled happily. "Hallo, John! What on earth are you doing here?"

"We've got some troops training in the area," I said. "What are you doing?"

She said they were down to visit their son at the Royal Naval College. I felt uneasy but tried not to appear so. Fortunately—for the strain was growing—I was called out to the foyer of the hotel a few minutes later. An officer from Combined Operations Staff had just come off the night train from London. He said: "Colonel, the whole plan has been changed. Jerry is too strong. He's been reinforced at some of the places we had intended to land."

We moved into a bedroom of the hotel and worked out a new plan on the spot. Now we were to land in Telegraph Bay on the south side of the island, just west of the Jerbourg

Peninsula; and not on the north coast as originally decided. We were to sail at six that evening. We completed preparations in the gymnasium of the Royal Naval College, planned the approach with the naval commanders, briefed the men, issued ammunition, and before we realized it, the time was a quarter to six.

I went over the final, minute details with my officers in the captain's cabin of the Scimitar on the way across. Lt. J. N. Smales's party was to establish a road block so that the rest of us would not be interrupted by German reinforcements. My party was to attack a machine-gun post and put a cable hut out of commission. Capt. V. T. C. de Crespigny and 2/Lt. Peter Young, with their men, were to attack the barracks. The password for the operation was "Desmond."

Somewhere on the way across, two of our Air-Sea Rescue launches dropped out with motor trouble. They had been assigned to the Independent Company, not to us. Just after midnight I went out on deck. It was a moonless night, but presently, from a couple of miles out, I could just distinguish the cliffs on the south side of Guernsey, dark, foreboding, and very high. We crept along the length of the island. At about a quarter to one I saw our gap in the cliff, the place where we were to climb to the top. On our right, Telegraph Point reached out into the sea. Our two launches slid alongside the destroyer and we clambered down on rope nettings. The sea was calm. It was dead easy.

### Sailing The Wrong Way

The launches purred away from the mother ship. The naval officers in charge of the launches started off on the agreed course, watching their compasses carefully. My own eyes were on the cliffs, and I was astonished to note that we were heading out to sea in the direction of Brittany. I turned to the skipper of our launch. "This is no good," I said. "We're going right away from Guernsey."

He turned from his compass and looked back and saw the cliff. "You're right! It must be this damn' de-gaussing arrangement that's



Mistakes made at Guernsey had been mastered

knocked the compass out of true. I ought to have had it checked."

"Don't worry about the compass: let's head straight for the beach."

"Right!"

About a hundred yards from the beach a black silhouette seemed to approach from our port side. In undertones some of the men murmured, "U-boat!" Momentarily my heart sank. What a mug's game this was! Why hadn't I stayed at home, in warmth and comfort? Then I realized that the U-boat was only a rock which appeared to have the exact shape of a submarine superstructure.

#### A Scramble In The Sea

At that moment, the launches, simultaneously and side by side, hit bottom and drew several feet of water. They had not been designed as landing craft, and besides, as the plan had been postponed for forty-eight hours, the tide was not halfway out. It was high. The bottom, instead of being smooth sand as we had calculated, was studded with boulders.

I jumped in, armpit deep. A wave hit me on the back of the neck and caused me to trip over a rock. All around me officers and men were scrambling for balance, falling, coming up and coughing salt water. I doubt if there was a dry weapon among us. On shore, officers and men loosened the straps of their battle-dress to let the sea water pour out. Then, with a sergeant named Knight close behind me, I set off running up the interminable flight of concrete steps which led to the cliff top.

I was eager. I went up far too fast. By the time I reached the top I was absolutely done, but Knight was even worse—gasping for breath like an untrained miler at the tape. I was so exhausted myself, I felt that my sodden battle-dress weighed a ton. My legs were leaden, my lungs bursting. I could hear the squeak and squelch of wet boots as the rest of the troop followed us up the beach. Fortunately, the night was warm.

We had to be clear of Guernsey by 3 a.m. and I had an idea we were already behind schedule. I led my men on between a few small

houses. As we passed each house, a dog inside began to bark. Presently there was a chorus of barking dogs behind us. "This is going to alert the whole damn' island," somebody remarked ruefully.

The machine-gun post which was the first objective of my little group was at the tip of Jerbourg Peninsula, eight hundred yards from the landing-place. We met de Crespigny and his men at the barracks and left them to attend to our own assignments. I sent C.S.M. Beasley, Knight and the others to the cable hut. Lt. Johnny Giles and I crawled up on each side of the little mound in which the machine-gun nest was dug. I carried grenades and a .45 Webley; Giles—a six foot four inch giant of a man—had a tommy-gun.

We jumped to our feet and into the nest, a sandbagged circle. We were both ready to shoot—but I found myself face to face with Johnny's tommy-gun; and he with my Webley. "Hell!" Johnny said bitterly. "There's no one here!"

We went down to where the others were cutting the cables leading from the hut. Knight asked me rather plaintively: "Please can I blow the place up, sir?" He had a pack of demolition stores on his back and was aching to use it. "No," I said. "Apparently Jerry doesn't know yet that we've come. There's no point in announcing it. Just cut the cables."

#### Sentry Was Disappointed

We went back to see if we could help de Crespigny's party. It was pitch dark, and as I approached, Cpl. "Curly" Gimbert burst through a hedge at me. The next thing I felt was a bayonet pushing demandingly through my tunic. "Password!" Gimbert hissed. He was a big, powerful man.

It seemed a hell of a time before I could say anything. There have been worse occasions since when I've been less scared. I remembered the word and let it out with a sigh. "Desmond!" I said. Gimbert, recognizing my voice, removed his bayonet. "All right, Colonel." I thought he sounded disappointed.

When we rejoined de Crespigny, his men had finished searching the barracks. There, as in the case of our machine-gun nest, no one was home. It was past time for the fireworks at the airfield between Jerry and our independent company. I listened. The night was still. I looked at my watch and saw with surprise and dismay that it was a quarter to three: time to go.

We formed up, on the road between the barracks and the Doyle Column—a monument we had used as a landmark. It was easy to guess from the muttered curses that the others shared my disgust at our negative performance and at the fact that we had met no Germans.

In this atmosphere of complete anti-climax, it was clear that none of us wanted to leave. But I called the officers together. "We've got to be back on the beach in ten minutes," I said, urgently. They got their men going on the run. In short order I was herding them like a sheep-dog down the concrete steps. Still the enemy showed no sign that he knew of our visit.

#### Shot Alerted The Germans

I was last down from the clifftop, with Peter Young clattering just ahead of me. Near the bottom, in my eagerness I accelerated and suddenly realized that my feet had lost their rhythm in matching the steps. I tripped and tumbled the rest of the way, head over heels. I had been carrying my revolver cocked at the ready. During the fall it went off, seeming tremendously loud and echoing against the cliffs.

This, at last, brought the Germans to life. Almost at once there was a line of tracer machine-gun fire from the top of the cliff on the other side of our cove. The tracers were going out to sea, towards the spot where I thought our launches were waiting.

"You all right, Colonel?" It was Johnny

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Film star David Niven helped to brief Durnford Slater for the Guernsey raid. Niven was then a captain serving with Combined Operations Staff



Brigadier Durnford Slater. "Looking back on the Guernsey raid," he writes, "I can see that under such rushed conditions it was foredoomed to fail"

# The girl who lured Meggernie

by NEILL C. WILSON

ILLUSTRATED BY OLIPHANT

Women? He loathed, despised and mistrusted every one of them. And why should this one—for all her artful, winning ways—be an exception?

ONCE, AND FOR CENTURIES, there had been several whole families on Trillick, but raw, bleak winds and hard fare had driven them off. Now only Loth Meggernie lived at one end of the isle and Hargis Findochty and his wife at the other, and it was a fine arrangement. For Loth and Hargis thereby saw little of each other, and what they saw they did not like.

Now, standing on the headland and enjoying the wind on his beard, Loth Meggernie saw the rowing boat. It was the Findochty cockleshell.

It was being handled with the lack of skill Loth would expect of a Findochty. But there was that aboard which sent a start through the length of him. Ailsa Findochty, Hargis's wife, was in the craft, and another woman, besides. The strange woman sprang nimbly to the rocky beach and helped grate the boat ashore.

Loth whistled to his dog Tirry, and turned on heel. What was going on below was Findochty business. But he was disturbed. Women to him were naught but a preening and a shamming. His heart for them had dried up at the age of twenty when the girl of his eye, a spirited barmaid over at Dunrobin, ran off with a sailor.

Loth and his dog returned to their sheep, which were drifting towards the Findochty grass. He drove the newcomer from his head. It was not a difficult matter, for in the next few days he caught neither flick nor flutter of her.

It was only because one of his ewes made off, and was not to be found on his side of the hills, that he tramped the misted brown two miles to the Findochty cottage to demand its return.

"For a fee," said Hargis shrewdly, standing in his doorway with folded arms. Hargis Findochty was not a gentle shepherd, but a bristly, big-jowled, violent man, used to defending himself.

"A fee! And for what?" demanded Loth.

"It was my ram she ran to. I did not invite her."

"How much would be this fee?"

"You've a dog called Tirry," Hargis said with envy.

"Aye."

"If he should sire pups by my bitch Rebina—" Hargis offered.

"To hell!" said Loth coldly.

"Half the litter would be yours, Meggernie. After I had first draw. Agree, and you'll have your ewe."

A voice broke through, "Who can be out



Like wild beasts, they grappled, they fought, they heaved. Everything they had was at stake

there, Findochty?" It was Ailsa's sharp voice. She appeared at Hargis's shoulder. "Oh, it's you, Loth Meggernie," as if a hundred neighbours dwelt on Trillick. "Why, come in. . . . This is my young sister, Tay Stenness."

It was dark in there. Loth could not readily make out if Tay was fair or ugly, and he had no wish to know. Woman's only purpose on this harsh planet was to drive men into pens like sheep, and then snap at their heels.

"I see my ewe by the hearth," said Loth. "I'll be along home with her now, and no time lost," and he scooped up the shameless truant.

As he pushed out, Hargis cackled with harsh laughter.

"I offered ye half my bitch's litter, and now I

withdraw the deal. Tirry has already been to see us."

"'Tis impossible!" rapped Loth. "He would never leave his sheep!"

Hargis hooted. "And when do you think it was, Meggernie, your ewe came straying?"

Mortified, Loth stumbled home. It was enough to make a man doubt the foundations of his faith. Yet the pricked ears and deep eyes of the collie showed no repentance when Loth asked him, as man to man, "Did you falter, lad? Could you no' wait till Findochty came ower wi' a proposition?"

Tirry only tossed his sharp nose and thick ruff and barked happily.

On Sabbath, Loth dressed in his best and rowed for Dunrobin. He sat in proper manner the full three hours in the kirk.

As the congregation poured out, Ailsa caught up with her neighbour and said to him, "It seems too bad, Loth, we always pull over to Dunrobin in two boats. Or, today, that yours goes home so light and ours so overloaded."

"I like to be alone in my boat," said Loth curtly. "I throw out a line behind." He choked. The dominie was at hand on the steps.

"On the good day, Loth?" the dominie spoke up sternly.

"A mere haddie or two," said Loth hastily, "but, fat. I'm leaving them at the manse."

"Well, if your hook just happened to fall owerboard," said the dominie, "and the twa were carelessly passing—"

Next evening Loth was in his own cottage, where he had every right to be, at his own loom under the candles where he belonged, tossing shuttle and thumping batten and making the fine Meggernie cloth, twenty threads and with eighteen picks to the inch, when Tirry rose from the earth floor with a growl. And Loth had the sensibility that his room was being spied into from its window. His back was to the stone opening, but he knew. He had lived alone too long not to smell human nearness or to feel the momentary shutting off of the draught.

He lost one kick of his treadle. He hurled the shuttle awry, straight through the warp. He sat as one frozen. But he could not, would not turn towards the window.

Upon the halting of the loom, the sense of a presence out there vanished. He set at once to recovering the shuttle and repairing the flaw lest Trillick's reputation for sound tweed be ruined.

But there was another shock ahead. This was



Meggernie sat up furiously. "Get out!" he yelled. She did not move an inch. "Get out, so I can put my trousers on—or I'll set the dog on you"

the realization, on succeeding nights, that he could no longer sit to his weaving with full attention. His ears were acock. One night he rushed out. There was naught outside the door but the dark mists and the wind.

He returned to his loom, but did not work. The pattern was gone from his head, and his hands felt as clumsy as clubs.

The plot of the Findochtys, he told himself, was making progress. They had set themselves to wreck his peace, smash his business, and so drive him from the island. Or marry him off and so reduce him practically to a Findochty. They had brought this woman to Trillick and drawn her around Loth Meggernie as if she were bait and he a haddie. But he wouldn't stand it.

She was no doubt trim and trig; he had noticed that much the first day. It was all a part of the slyness of the female race, and the experience with the Dunrobin barmaid had warned him to beware of it. By heaven, he wouldn't have it.

**N**EXT day Loth rose from his bed, ate a grim breakfast, sent Tirry out with the sheep, and strode from the house. He went straight to the Findochty cottage. Halfway there he came on Hargis Findochty.

"About that ewe," said Hargis in his coarse wrangling jangle. "I might take her, now, for two of Rebina's pups. Tirry was ower to see her longer ago than we thocht. The litter of seven came last night."

"Findochty," Loth's voice was from the

very bottom of him: "This isle is small. There has never been room for Meggernies and Findochtys both. There is even less room now."

Hargis viewed him unblinking under heavy brows. "What is the proposition?"

"I'm going to beat you to a jigging whey."

"Are you so?" said Hargis. "And if you win?"

"I take your land, your sheep and everything but the boat that will row yourself and the women away from Trillick."

"And if you lose?"

"I go. My sheep and land are yours."

"I get Tirry too?"

"Not Tirry. He is not in the bargain."

Hargis looked disappointed. "Very well."

"I hate your beard," said Loth, beginning to work himself up. "I hate your nose, your ugly mouth and your bleary, sneaky eye."

"And I," said Hargis, rumbling like a roll of island-breaking surf, "despise your gangly carcass, your clacking tongue and your ancestors. I even despise your collie. He is badly trained."

"Tis a lie," said Loth.

"This for the man that tells me I lie," Hargis struck his jaw.

Loth smote him in the teeth.

They leaped apart. They walked around each other, high on their toes, like two dogs ready to spring. Loth drove for the brisket. Hargis countered with an elbow to the windpipe. They grappled. They heaved. They parted so forcibly that they fell. They leaped up, cat-quick, and

circled again. They locked, in the flash of an eye; they found beards with their fingers and ears with their teeth; knees came up like pistons. They swung tremendous loops. Knuckles crashed into flesh.

**S**UDDENLY there was naught under Loth but a falling. And a landing, with a jar, among hard rocks. These would be the rocks, he decided, where he kept his boat. His legs felt split to the neck and tied behind his ears. The waves rolled in with surge and pound and coasted over him. This was how it felt to be drowned, and it was very peaceful. This was how it felt to be beaten. The thought was not so peaceful. And by Findochty. The thought was unbearable. He groaned and tried to move an arm. It must have been buried in sand. He tried the other. He was not even sure it was there. In his ears was a clack and whir; that would be the waves washing between the rocks.

He got the arm loose that had felt buried under tons of sand, and put it to his head. A wet clout came off. His eye could open a little. He was not by the sea; he was in a house. A bright little house with posies of heather in mugs along the window. The whir and clack was from a tall wool wheel. He raised his head an inch. There was a young woman, and her shoulder was towards him. Lithe and erect she was and this would be Tay Stenness; he remembered the posture of her in the boat. She

*Continued on page 35*

# Jerry Desmond finds his own line

by JOHN HARMAN

With TV, the funny man's shadow has grown into a star in his own right. But he still refuses to admit that his luck has changed



**K**NOWN TO FOUR MILLION TV viewers as quick-witted Jerry Desmond, of *What's My Line?* James Robert Sadler is a restless, obstinate actor of forty-four, openly determined never to admit that his luck has changed for the better.

He preferred to look on the black side in August, 1942. After years as a singer and dancer in vaudeville, he was teamed to play the stooge to Sid Field, a then unknown comedian. The act went on tour and was successful. But Desmond was unimpressed. When they reached Birmingham, acclaimed as the comedy discovery of the century, he telephoned his agent in a mood of suicidal despair. Says Desmond: "I demanded to resign. I complained that I was desperately unhappy, that I didn't care for my partner, and that I was convinced my whole career had been ruined."

His agent, R. G. Blackie, says: "I argued with him and eventually persuaded him to wait. And it's just as well that he took my advice. The stage partnership with Field proved to be the turning point in his career. Seven months later he was established in the West End."

Thanks to Sunday night appearances in *What's My Line?* Jerry Desmond is now a nation-wide celebrity. Strangers telephoning his St. John's Wood flat have included an eight-year-old girl who called at eleven o'clock one night to ask for a signed portrait. When he was walking down a London street recently, a car drew up at the kerb and out jumped a policeman—to ask for his autograph. Desmond accepts the praise with a strong pinch of mistrust, but, in the words of Arthur Dent, a film chief who signed him for the lead in a new picture, *Alf's Baby*: "The fan letters and back-slapping add up to one important achievement: Desmond, the ex-Cochran boy, is at last on his own, a funny man's shadow no longer. He has blossomed out."

## How He "Nursed" Sid Field

This "blossoming out" is belated recognition of Desmond's unhurried charm—a quality put to the test at the Prince of Wales Theatre, London, on March 18, 1943. It was the first night of *Strike A New Note* and, in the estimation of a hardened stagehand, the most dramatic first night he has seen. "Everyone was in a high state of nerves," he says, "and especially Sid Field, for whom the show was his great chance in the West End. He had to be pushed—literally pushed—on to the stage, and those of us watching in the wings realized that Desmond was handling a man jellied with fright. Luckily, Jerry's presence of mind never left him. He

Jerry Desmond and wife (centre) with their daughter Jacqueline. His marriage proposal was a masterpiece of casualness



A joke with his film daughter, Pauline Stroud.

went ahead with the act quietly and calmly. In five minutes, Sid Field had relaxed to normal. In ten, the audience was his. And by the final curtain, with the theatre in an uproar, we knew that Sid—helped by Desmond—had made it."

Personality, at twenty-five guineas a session, has earned Desmond fame guessing other people's jobs in *What's My Line?* Viewers like him for his sharp incisive glances at challengers, his intuition (he guessed a mattress tester in two questions) and his smooth manner, which glossed over some awkward pauses on a night when Gilbert Harding, his male companion in the quiz team, succumbed to fog and asthma.

Colleagues in the programme regard him as a friend in need. Ghislaine Alexander, sitting to his right on the panel, relies on him as "a neighbour to whom to pass the questioning when it becomes too difficult"; Barbara Kelly, sitting to his left, welcomes him equally for "shots in the dark which put the clues in perspective"; and producer T. Leslie Jackson, up in the control gallery, knows that when the panel is baffled, as happened with a beautiful, demure young lady who turned out to be a butcher, Desmond can stop the show from flagging.

His salesmanlike ability to speak on any subject at short notice—in a radio parlour game recently he successfully "sold" a refrigerator to an "Eskimo"—results from a lifetime in the theatre, a profession where a lively tongue is essential. His father Joe, who used to be a steelworker, elder brother Jack and sisters Elsie and Kitty, were known as the Sadler Elsie Quartette: singers, dancers and quick-change artists. His mother helped behind the scenes. Young



Jerry plays her father in *Alf's Baby*. His wife Peggy (left) and Pauline's mother share in the laugh

Jerry, born in Middlesbrough in 1908, shared their travels, went to a different school each week, spent his childhood in lodgings. "At eleven, I was the chief electrician of the act. When Father blew his whistle as the signal for a quick change, I was the one who pulled the master switch and put out the lights."

His first lesson in versatility was given on his fourteenth birthday. Coming home from the cinema, the Sadlers found a note propped up on the mantelpiece. "It was from my sister Elsie," Desmond recalls. "She had eloped. It was a bad blow. Father had signed a contract for the Sadler Elsie Quartette, and 'quartette' it had to be. Turning to me he said: 'From tonight, you're Elsie!' I was, too. I went on the stage in Elsie's clothes, with a couple of locks of hair pinned under my hat, and did her routine. Next morning my father bought me a wig, and we deceived audiences for quite a while."

#### Matters Came To A Head

"But the situation became embarrassing. 'Elsie' was growing up. She had knobbly knees. Matters came to a head at Lincoln. The theatre manager there had a strict rule that men of the company were not to mix with the girls. He caught me talking to a brunette, and father had a terrific row with him, after which the Sadler Elsie Quartette broke up. I started a song and dance act with my brother Jack as 'Jack and Jerry Desmond.'"

Although he is one of the world's pushers (worry brought him stomach ulcers in his twenties) Desmond contrives to be a pessimist, resigned to the theory that destiny is pre-cast

at birth. And being superstitious enough to study his horoscope every week, and to insist on that final "e" which gives his stage name a "lucky thirteen" letters, he has dared to meddle with the future on only two occasions.

The first was in July, 1928. "In those days," says a friend, "he had black curly hair, and with his tall, well-built physique, he was all that a musical producer could ask for." So Desmond went to be auditioned for C. B. Cochran's *This Year Of Grace*. They turned him down. "Walking home," he remembers, "I felt instinctively that Fate had made a mistake. I tried to will myself into that show. And sure enough, the next day I received a card inviting me back to the theatre. They apologized for an error—and took me with the show to New York."

The second time he risked a premonition was three months before the birth of his second child. Going to his wife Peggy, he horrified his in-laws by throwing a silver identity bracelet into her lap and forecasting the baby's sex by saying: "These will be his names: Gerald John." As it happened, he was right.

Desmond's manner makes him the ideal performer on TV, where any hesitancy seems magnified, but he himself has doubts about this asset and squirms when critics apply the adjective "suave." Mrs. Desmond, in saying that her husband has always been an expert at self-confidence, recalls that his proposal of marriage was a masterpiece of casualness.

"I was eighteen, and appearing at Scarborough," she says. "The show was *Love Lies*, a musical comedy. Jerry was in the same company, but having been a Cochran Young

Lady I fancied myself rather superior to the rest and didn't take any notice of him. Standing in the wings one night, dressed as an Irish girl and looking not a day older than twelve, I was just about to take my cue when Jerry came up in Spanish costume and said off-handedly: 'If ever you think of marrying, I'd like you to think of me.' I didn't have a chance to reply. The music started. I had to go on."

They were married at Brixton register office early in 1930. When their daughter, Jacqueline, was born, the Desmonds, fearing she might become precocious if allowed to live with theatre folk, sent her to stay with friends in London.

"At the time," says Desmond, "we were touring the provinces with my brother Jack and his wife. The four of us wore Western outfits. I played the guitar. Theatres paid £42 10s. a week for the act, but when this was shared and expenses had been paid (including Jacqueline's board and lodging) we simply hadn't enough."

#### £800,000 Film That Flopped

As a song and dance team ("Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers were the rage") he and his wife spent nearly eight years in Scotland: concert parties in the summer and autumn; pantomime during winter and spring.

When *Strike A New Note* had given Desmond and Sid Field a footing in the West End and their stage association had deepened into personal friendship, both went into an £800,000 film flop, *London Town*. Desmond's next film venture as the dashing Colonel Lovelace in *Card-board Cavalier*, was more successful.

The Desmonds are a homely, devoted couple (when his wife had a serious illness recently he was nurse, cook and housekeeper combined) and they entertain informally, expecting guests to take them as they find them. Domestic peace is maintained by the fact that their temperaments, though different, counterbalance. Jerry's fits of depression over professional chances which he has missed, or of smouldering impatience caused by lifts which are too slow, doors which stick and similar day-to-day irritations, occasionally last for hours, during which he assumes an impressive silence. But they have little effect on Peggy. She postpones her worries till tomorrow.

Their modern, comfortably furnished flat has been quiet since Jacqueline, now twenty-two, left it in 1948 to marry Peter Howes, son of Bobby Howes. Seven-year-old Gerald ("the light of our lives") is away at boarding school in Hampshire.

As part of a personal publicity campaign, Desmond sacrifices weekends for prize-givings at fêtes, bazaars and horse shows. Mrs. Desmond keeps a wardrobe of "going-out-with-Jerry" clothes for these occasions. Oil painting is a newly acquired outlet for Desmond's artistic talents. "Sid Field's daughter, Dianne, took me round the Tate Gallery. She persuaded me to buy an easel, some paints and try a canvas or two myself."

#### Played With A Broken Neck

Desmond is respected in his profession because he is dependable. During a rehearsal of George Black's musical *Look Who's Here!* two days before the show was due to open in Blackpool, Jerry tried to cross a catwalk over the orchestra pit during a blackout. When the lights went up he had vanished. After a while he was found in a heap, twenty-five feet down the organ shaft.

He was carried to his lodgings, where he lay in bed delirious with eight stitches in his scalp. Five hours before curtain-up, he regained consciousness, but the doctors diagnosed a fractured neck, and said he would spend six weeks on his back. He argued. A compromise was reached. Fitted with a tight leather collar, and with his hair matted with blood, he played his full part in the show.

Comments George Black: "Desmond behaved in the highest traditions of the theatre. He's a trouper. That's his line." THE END



Again I heard it—that stertorous breathing. Sweating with fear, I gripped the stick and went in. A woman came slowly towards me. It was Sarah

# Fortune is a Woman

by WINSTON GRAHAM

ILLUSTRATED BY GEORGE DITTON

At Lowis I found Sarah—and the key to the grim puzzle. It was, perhaps, the biggest shock of all

**I** HAD BEEN combing London to find a man who had been blackmailing my wife Sarah. He was an art-forgery named Clive Fisher, and I'd run him to earth at the Fin de Siècle Club in Chelsea.

I'm Oliver Branwell; my job is to check claims for insurance companies. Fisher said he had proof that Sarah's first husband, Tracey Moreton, had defrauded the underwriters by setting

fire to his own house, Lowis Manor, in Kent.

Fisher was right—righter than he knew. I'd had my eye on Tracey for months before it happened. Naming no names, I'd gone to Henry Dane for advice about him: Henry was the shrewdest claims investigator I knew. Too late, I'd driven down to Lowis on the night of the fire. I'd found Tracey's body, and enough evidence to satisfy me that the fire was no accident. There was only one thing I couldn't

account for: I could have sworn I'd heard Tracey's asthmatic breathing in the darkness after I'd seen his body. . . .

In Fisher's studio I'd found the stub of a herbal cigarette; and the only man I knew who smoked herbal cigarettes was Tracey. They were supposed to be good for his asthma. It was a family complaint—his mother had it, too.

I hadn't dared to mention the cigarette to Sarah. But now matters were coming to a head. My colleagues were calling a meeting to inquire into my conduct. In the City they were saying that I'd cashed in on Tracey's fraud by marrying his wife.

Then, just when I needed her most, Sarah disappeared. If Tracey were still alive, and she had gone to him. . . . I was desperate. Only Fisher could help me. At the Fin de Siècle I threatened to start a rough house if he didn't tell me the truth about Tracey.

Fisher gave me a twisted smile. "Why don't you go down to Lowis and see?"

"You seem to forget it was burnt down," I said.

He stood up coolly. "Not all of it," he said.

## FINAL INSTALMENT

### Last Visit To Lowis

**A** CLOCK had struck nine as I left the Fin de Siècle. A light fog had come down while I was in the club, but in Kent it was no more than wet roads and a drizzle. I seemed to be driving farther and farther into a nightmare, to the point where I had to open a door, terrified

*Continued on page 26*

# Peter Crane succours the pilgrims to Lourdes

by DENNIS HOLMAN

Into the town of inexplicable healing pour two million people a year. Some are healthy, others dying, all drawn to the famous spring which has been a fountain of faith for nearly a century

**W**HEN PETER CRANE was sixteen, he went for the first time to Lourdes, the French town at the foot of the Pyrénées famous for its shrine of the Blessed Virgin Mary and visited by more Roman Catholic pilgrims than any other spot on earth.

After checking in at his hotel, Crane went out into the narrow street and down a steep slope to the bridge over the turgid, rushing River Gave. The street was thronged with French, Germans, Italians, Irish, Spaniards, English—all distinguishable by their badges; the shops were doing a brisk trade in rosaries, medallions, musical Grottoes, and Madonna-shaped bottles to be filled with the miraculous water and shipped home to friends and relatives.

Past the steps of the Sept Douleurs hospital, Crane encountered a long line of wheelchairs and stretcher-trolleys, each drawn by a *brancardier* wearing stretcher straps across his shoulders and telling his beads aloud with the sick pilgrim in his charge. The Blessed Sacrament procession had just ended with benediction on the steps of the Rosary Chapel, and the line of sick returning to the hospital stretched down as far as the teeming Domain.

Crane was near the Crowned Virgin statue when a *chef de service*, with a silver badge of the Hospitalité de Notre-Dame de Lourdes, grabbed him by the arm. A woman had collapsed—there are always plenty of sick who persist in roughing it as ordinary pilgrims—and Crane was asked to carry her to the Sept Douleurs. Emaciated, she proved no serious burden, but she began vomiting blood as they went by the open air Café Brancardier, and died in Crane's arms before they reached the hospital.

## Cures Not The First Aim

That was the first job Crane ever did for a sick person in Lourdes. It was the summer of 1931. Except for the war years, when he enlisted as a guardsman and became a lieutenant-colonel, he has returned every season to work as a *brancardier*. A creature of habit, he always travels with the Catholic Association pilgrimage, in charge of a section of *brancardiers*, taking the same room at the same hotel.

The point Peter Crane always makes when discussing Lourdes is that pilgrimages are not organized mainly with the intention of praying for miraculous cures of the sick. "We come to Lourdes," he says, "to carry out Our Lady's wishes. She asked for penance and prayer."

Lourdes is uncomfortable for most pilgrims—overcrowded, hot and exhausting during the pilgrimage season. One of the principal devotions is Stations of the Cross, or meditations before the fourteen stages of Christ's passion and death. Usually performed before pictures on church walls, they are done at Lourdes up a steep and stony hill—tough climbing without going barefoot, as some pilgrims prefer.

The only "fun" on a pilgrimage is the gay



Peter Crane (centre). He has never seen a miracle; nor does he need one to bolster his faith



Sick pilgrims before the Grotto. Forty-eight Lourdes cures have been adjudged miraculous



The journey of faith: pilgrims on the train to Lourdes. Last year, there were 227,846 immersions in the icy baths at the Grotto

piety of the nightly torchlight procession, with eighty or ninety thousand people carrying candles round the Domain, winding up the ramps of the Basilica, singing "Immaculate Mary," with the melody chimed out by the church bells every hour and by every music box sold in town.

The most vivid of all Lourdes impressions is the fervour and intensity of its massed prayer—people praying as they stand, kneel, or lie on stretchers, with fingers clasped or arms outstretched, tens of thousands praying at the altars, praying outside the baths, praying at the Grotto. The Grotto is the object of the pilgrimage: a small cave at the side of the hill under the Basilica, lined with discarded crutches, spinal jackets, calipers, walking sticks, with an altar behind a grille, an immense bouquet of burning candles and an image of the Virgin placed high up in a niche.

Here pilgrims come to meditate and pray, and here in the mornings Holy Communion is distributed, the priests going with their golden chalices among the wheelchairs and stretchers. Outside the Grotto is the line of twelve taps, where pilgrims fill their bottles and drink from the famous spring; it has flowed for ninety-four years, since a crowd watching Bernadette Soubirous in ecstasy saw her dig with her hands in the earth and smear her face from the muddy trickle that appeared. "Go, drink at the source, and wash in it," was the command Bernadette said she had received from "the Lady" of her vision. Today, 27,360 gallons flow from the spring every day, enough to fill millions of tiny bottles to be sent all over the world.

Next to the taps at the Grotto are the baths: three curtained doorways, with a railed-off area occupied most of the day by sick awaiting their turn, praying with eyes shut and lips moving; and outside the railings a crowd of fit pilgrims, grouped by languages, repeating prayers and invocations called out by the priests.

"We try to give every sick pilgrim two immersions a day," Crane explains. "There are

seven baths, and last year 227,846 immersions were given in them, the water being changed only twice a day. By normal standards of hygiene, it is not just insanitary; it is madness. But this is Lourdes. Never in the shrine's history has there been a case of transferred infection from the baths."

On one September day last year, 789 pilgrims came to the male section, 334 in the morning session, 455 in the afternoon. There were tuberculosis and paralysis cases, several with Pott's disease, disseminated sclerosis, rheumatoid arthritis, deformities, paraplegia, open wounds and fistulae. There were blind people, spastics and cancer cases, and they all went into the same stone baths.

### Drink Is An Act Of Faith

Those who could walk stood knee-deep in the water, stripped except for a wet sarong of blue twill. Supported on each side by a *brancardier*, they read the invocations, and went down, body and head under. Stretcher cases went in on a webbing stretcher, a number obviously in considerable pain, and most too shocked by the icy immersion to be able to utter the prayers. A few had to be persuaded to come out.

Some pilgrims drank the water as they went down. After one man came out—a bad case of seborrheic dermatitis, with his skin scaled and peeling—one of the *brancardiers* assisting took a collapsible cup from his pocket, filled it from the bath, and drank. Crane says he always drank the water after a day's bathing, "partly as an act of faith, and partly as penance."

Chemical analysis does not show Lourdes water to possess any particular therapeutic value. Every pilgrim claiming to have been cured is immediately taken to the Bureau Medical, a clinic within the Domain, fitted with facilities for a complete medical examination, and with at least thirty doctors on call at any time during the pilgrimage season.

The Bureau's function is to examine and report. Out of about fifty cases examined every season, perhaps seven are invited to return the following year for further examination, and of these one or possibly two are then considered worth sending on to the Bureau's national committee in Paris.

To get as far as the national committee the cure must have been instantaneous and complete. Full medical histories are necessary, supported where applicable by X-rays, clinical and laboratory records. "We are Devil's advocates," says Dr. François Leuret, the Bureau president. "We must take a sceptical view, trying to explain the cure away by every means."

### Shock Can Cure Blindness

Cures that can in any way be attributed to auto-suggestion are not considered. In this category are classed certain forms of blindness and paralysis, where patients have been known to recover sometimes as a result of an emotional shock. An Englishwoman returning from Lourdes two years ago sat up in the train and said she could see. She had been blind, but the cure was not admitted as miraculous.

Only the bishop of the diocese in which the patient resides can declare a cure miraculous, and this is done only when both medical commissions agree that it is inexplicable. Altogether, forty-eight Lourdes cures have been adjudged miraculous. They cover a wide range of human suffering, though tubercular infections of the lungs, spine and stomach recur in the records. In many cases, the sufferers were in the last stages and often on the point of death. But club feet are also reported straightened, unconnected fractures suddenly repaired, sores healed, fistulae and ulcerous openings cicatrized, cancers caused to disappear overnight, living skeletons with chronic enteritis restored to buoyant health. There is an account of a needle, embedded in a girl's thumb for several years

and causing her great pain, suddenly coming to the surface as the hand was immersed. Paralysis victims have stood and walked.

The most famous English cure is that of John Traynor in 1923. Traynor, wounded in the war, had been operated on by a number of well-known surgeons. Totally disabled and in receipt of a hundred per cent pension, he went to Lourdes with both legs partially paralysed, his right arm atrophied and useless, and suffering from epilepsy as a result of head wounds. He had lost all control, and each time he coughed the membrane of his brain bulged through an opening in his skull where he had been trepanned. When he returned from Lourdes, a week later, bone had grown over the opening in his skull, there was no trace of paralysis in his legs, his previously atrophied arm was as strong and effective as it had ever been and, after examination at the hospital in Liverpool which he had been attending for years, he was found to be in perfect health.

### Pension Could Not Be Stopped

For years Traynor returned as a *brancardier* to Lourdes, where Crane met him. He died in 1948, the father of thirteen children. When he wrote to the Ministry of Pensions suggesting that as he was now fit he was not entitled to a pension, the reply was that he had been classified permanently disabled by a medical board and their decision was irrevocable. Not even a miracle could affect his entitlement to a hundred per cent pension.

Lourdes cures have not been exclusively Catholic. Mlle Madeleine Guinot, cured of tuberculosis of the spine and lungs on July 3, 1934, was agnostic by education and personal conviction. Germaine Bristen, cured of tuberculosis of the left knee, kidneys and bladder on September 9, 1937, was a Protestant. Most of the cures are recorded as having taken place during the procession of the Blessed Sacrament.

Beginning at the Grotto, and headed by an imperiously moustached little man in a blue and silver uniform, carrying a staff which he raps severely on the ground to keep the leading "Children of Mary" in order, the procession winds slowly round the Domain to the solemn chant of "Lauda Sion." The sick lie or sit under the horse-chestnut and plane trees on each side of the square, as the procession passes up the centre with its banners and flags and assemblies on the chapel steps. Last come the bishops, one of them bearing the Sacrament in a golden monstrance, which is taken round the square, the party pausing after every few paces for the monstrance to be lifted above the stretchers in a Sign of the Cross.

Lourdes cures are attributed to the intercession of Our Lady of Lourdes, or that particular manifestation of the Virgin which the Roman Catholic Church now accepts was seen by Bernadette eighteen times. Bernadette died in 1879, but before that the devotion had begun to spread. Today it is a major Catholic movement, with the number of pilgrims increasing in the last three years at the rate of 200,000 a year. Well over two million arrived in 1952.

### "No Explanation Necessary"

Responsible directly to the bishop is the *Hospitalité de Notre-Dame de Lourdes*, the confraternity of *brancardiers* pledged to the service of the sick to which Crane belongs. During peak periods there can be as many as two thousand sick in Lourdes, each of whom has to be taken every morning for mass and Holy Communion at the Grotto, given breakfast there, immersed, returned to the hospitals for lunch, brought back, immersed again, then laid out in the square for the afternoon's procession.

Crane has never seen a miracle, but he has never needed one to strengthen his faith. "For those who believe," he quotes, "no explanation is necessary. For those who don't, no explanation is possible."

THE END



FROM THE RIDICULOUS TO THE SUBLIME . . . "Professor" Jimmy plays for laughs during his schoolmaster's act in the 1951 Royal Command Performance. A few months later, as Aberdeen University's new Rector (right), he faced a real body of students. His problem then was: how to be serious in joking sort of way

## TAKE IT FROM ME (10) by JIMMY EDWARDS

# Jimmy scores a double triumph

The Royal Command Performance was an ordeal for Jimmy, but it was nothing compared to his election as Rector. How he joked his way through is told in this final chapter of his life-story

**I**N THE RELATIVELY short time I've been in show business, three highlights stand out brightly in my memory. One day, in the early winter of 1949, the telephone rang. "This is Peter Brough speaking," a voice said. "How would you like to appear at Buckingham Palace this Christmas?"

"You're not serious?"

"I am," Peter replied.

"What's it all about?" I asked. He explained that the occasion was the annual Buckingham Palace Staff Ball, which was to be attended by the King and Queen. Gerald was to provide the music and, in addition to myself, the invited entertainers were Peter Brough, Frankie Howerd and Florence Desmond. There seemed hardly any need to say that I would accept.

At the time we were broadcasting *Take It*

*From Here* "live," and I had to rush straight from the studio to the Palace. After the cabaret we were presented to the King and Queen. I was last in the line and Frankie Howerd was next to me. His obvious nervousness might have been contagious, but I was so genuinely thrilled that I refused to let my nerves spoil the occasion for me. As I waited my turn, I thought: would I ever have had the privilege of shaking hands with the King and Queen if I had become a schoolmaster?

Then I was being presented to the Queen. She smiled the warm and charming smile that everyone knows. "We've just been listening to you on the wireless, Mr. Edwards," she said.

I hardly knew what to say, but, of course, the Queen makes conversation with her an easy matter. The discussion turned to the Royal

Command Variety Performance, and I mentioned that I had heard that the audiences there were very hard to please. She nodded gravely. "They seem to look up at us a great deal before they laugh," she said, "as if first to make sure that we are laughing." Two years later I was able to verify this statement.

I suppose I should have been jubilant when I received my invitation from Harry Marlow, the secretary of the Variety Artists Benevolent Fund, to appear in the Royal Command Performance of 1951. It came by registered post and said: "In co-operation with Mr. Jack Hylton, we are compiling a programme for submission to His Majesty the King, and I shall be glad if you will let me know by return if you will be available to appear in the event of your being selected. The maximum time we can allow you, in view of the limited time at our disposal, will be eight minutes."

This was obviously an important moment in my career, an honour I had been subconsciously working towards ever since I started. But swamping my feelings of jubilation was a certain misgiving: *was it too soon?* To be a success at the Command, to stop the show, or in some way to exceed everybody else, could improve one's chances in the business; but to be a flop could prove disastrous. Those words in Marlow's letter, "eight minutes," were my greatest worry. At the Adelphi my act was averaging twenty-seven minutes at each performance, and it was going to be a very difficult task to telescope all this material into such a miserably short time.

The performance was held in the Victoria Palace, and as usual it was on Monday evening—October 29—and the whole of Sunday and

Monday was devoted to exhaustive rehearsals. The stalls of the theatre were crammed with people waiting their turn to rehearse. In this way, each of us had to go through his act before a select audience of professionals—the most critical people in the world. Rehearsals like this are never of any real value to me, for I am always tempted to rag about and put in jokes that I could never possibly use on the night. Consequently, the act bears no great resemblance to the one which I hope to do, and this is rather irritating for the sombre bigwigs in the centre of the stalls supervising the proceedings.

On this occasion it was Jack Hylton's turn to present the show, and he sat there in grey-haired state while his producer, Alec Shanks, worked hard on the detailed production of the many sets. The presentation of about two hundred artists in a smooth-flowing show of only two hours' duration is a considerable achievement, and I marvelled at the hard-working efficiency of Alec in the stalls and the sweating team of stagehands backstage.

I had an excellent spot in the programme, coming at the end of a section devoted entirely to radio people. George and Alfred Black had sent over the schoolmaster's desk which I had used in my act for so long at the Adelphi. I had determined to include the euphonium and the posthorn, so in my eight minutes there was not much time for schoolmasterly jokes before I got on to the music. But after each run-through Hughie Charles, Jack Hylton's right-hand man, came to me with the mournful news that I was well over my time. I was asked not to exceed it during the actual performance, so I had this one big worry to cope with before the show even started.

### Calmness Was Shattered

Throughout these preliminaries I was a monument of icy calmness, but this was shattered when the time came for the actual performance. Although the King was unfortunately unable to attend owing to illness, the Queen and Princess Margaret were in the Royal Box, and everyone was overcome by the occasion, including myself.

When I finally went on to do my act, I tried much too hard, and the sight of Hughie Charles standing in the wings, making frantic signs to me, was almost as much as I could bear. The

audience behaved exactly as I had expected, glancing furtively all the time at the Royal Box, and felt in no way like a true music hall audience. However, I lashed at them with my tongue and managed to get some sort of response. I got quite a few laughs, and even one round of applause at a most unexpected spot. As I walked off the stage, a feeling of immense relief came over me.

At the end of the show I was very proud to be among the few who were presented to the Queen, and as she shook hands with me and I bowed low, she said: "I am glad to meet you again, Mr. Edwards. I enjoyed your act immensely." These words were ample reward for all the nervous strain of the preceding two days.

### Was Letter A Legpull?

Hot on the heels of this affair came the Rectorial. Earlier that year, during the summer, I was looking through my mail when I came across an unusual letter which demanded attention. It was an invitation from a group of students at Aberdeen University to accept nomination as a candidate for the Rectorship.

I was close enough to my own student days at Cambridge to know that undergraduates will often go to great lengths for a legpull; and I felt, at first, that I was being put up as a freak candidate in a mood of sheer irresponsibility. But, as I re-read the letter, I was struck by the serious, carefully considered way it had been written. Enclosed with it was a copy of a university publication which carried an article on the Rectorial. From this I learned that the choice of Rector was up to the students themselves and that the election took place every three years. This was the one opportunity the students had of appointing a university official of their own choosing.

I learned, too, that although the Rector's duties have in recent years become nominal, he is, nevertheless, the President of the University Court. This body, which is the supreme head of the university, is responsible for the management of its property and revenue, as well as for seeing that the professors and lecturers fulfil their prescribed duties. I wrote a letter of acceptance. Later, I heard that a committee of the "Edwards for Rector" Party had been formed and that the committee had drawn up elaborate plans for the painting of hoardings, and for the flying of electioneering banners from flagstaffs and towers. It all sounded exciting, but since a Rectorial candidate is not permitted to take part in the campaign, I had to be content to wait for the news at home.

### The Opposition Was Strong

When nominations were closed, there were four names on the official list. They were Lord Lovat, Capt. Farquharson, Paul Robeson and—unfamiliar billing—James Edwards, M.A. With such opposition I felt I had no chance. Lord Lovat, a Highland laird, Chief of the Clan Fraser, wartime leader of the famed Lovat Scouts, decorated for gallantry in the field, passionately interested in Scottish affairs: how could I hope to compete against him for Scottish votes? Or against Capt. Farquharson, Eton and Oxford, Royal Scots Greys, holder of the M.C., Laird of Invercauld, Chief of the Clan Farquharson, member of the Aberdeen County Council—and a man put forward as the local candidate who would end the tradition of absentee Rectors? Paul Robeson, whose life story and beliefs are well known, seemed a lesser danger.

For myself, modesty forbids me to list my own qualifications, but my party managed to cook up a pretty imposing election manifesto: "We have, then, Edwards the university



The new Rector is welcomed by his students.

graduate, in age and experience particularly suited to understand the student; F/Lt. Edwards, D.F.C., a man of unquestionable initiative and courage; and Mr. Edwards, the farmer, who spends time, in spite of his other commitments, tending his dairy herd of Ayrshire cattle. Lastly, we give you Jimmy Edwards, a man of character, wit and outstanding personality—a man who in our opinion, and we hope yours, is eminently suited to become the new Rector of Aberdeen University." This eulogy almost had me convinced.

Meanwhile, the Edwards Party got busy. They organized striking forces to carry the war into the enemy territory. Banners—bearing the words "Edwards For Rector"—were hung outside Beaufort Castle, the seat of Lord Lovat, and Invercauld House, the home of Capt. Farquharson. Counter attacking, Lovat and Farquharson men carried notices: "The B.B.C. can keep Jim Edwards!"

Then my men struck again by giving me the highest billing of my career when they scaled Ben Nevis and Ben Maedhui to unfurl banners bearing my name on the summits. It was a ding-dong battle. Walls and hoardings in Aberdeen were plastered with the names of all the candidates. Placards put up in the morning were defaced by opposing factions at night.

The Edwards Party excelled itself, however, when one of its numbers donned a frogman's outfit and swam out to a buoy in the harbour to hoist the magic slogan on it—this was on a rough night when the Aberdeen lifeboat had been called out to a ship in distress!

On the day of the Rectorial Election, I went



Aberdeen students scaled Ben Nevis to hang out this slogan in the Rectorial campaign. "It was the highest billing in my career," writes Jimmy



Aberdeen officials had expected the students' ragging to get out of hand. But Jimmy's luck held out

out hunting. In the excitement of the chase, the goings-on in Aberdeen quite slipped from my mind, and I did not get back to the farm until the evening. My brother Alan, looking rather harried, greeted me with obvious relief. "I've been driven nearly mad with phone calls from newspapers and from Aberdeen," he said.

I had won. That night, in a rosy cloud of triumph, I talked to many newspapermen who had come down to interview and photograph me. Ever since my nomination, the Rectorial had attracted the attention of the press. Here was a story: a comic who wanted to be a Rector! At the interviews I was careful to point out that I regarded my election as anything but a joke or a publicity stunt, and that I was determined to take my responsibilities seriously.

#### Scottish Tempers Were Frayed

However, the excitement and tension of the election campaign were nothing to the difficulties which were to follow. It was agreed that I should deliver my Rectorial Address during the week of January 20-26, preferably on the twenty-fifth to coincide with the Birthday Ball. But in December an unexpected crisis developed. The Senatus reversed its original decision, and the Rectorial Installation was indefinitely postponed. In Aberdeen, tempers were frayed among university officials and student representatives. I wondered what had caused this sudden, dramatic reversal.

I soon heard from my friends in Aberdeen. At the recent election of Dr. John McCormack to the Rectorship of Glasgow University, student boisterousness had degenerated into hooliganism. This had led the authorities at Aberdeen to fear

a similar development there. Indeed, said my friends, it was traditional that Scottish Rectorials should be excuses for licensed ragging, when missiles (often toilet rolls, euphemistically described by the press as "paper streamers") were hurled, and groans, hisses and catcalls interrupted the speech of the incoming Rector.

Now I could see what had alarmed the university authorities. They had paled at the thought of what might happen when the speechmaker was a man who made his living by playing the fool.

I decided to pay a quick visit to Aberdeen to see if I could help to find a way out of the deadlock. I spent a busy day listening to both sides of the argument. "There is nothing personal in this, Mr. Edwards," the Principal assured me. "It is just that we have been determined for a long time to prevent another unruly ceremony. You are simply unlucky in being the next Rector to come along." I returned to my farm disconsolately, but it was not many days before I received an exultant phone call from a pro-Edwards student in Aberdeen. He told me that the Senatus had once again dramatically changed its mind. The Installation *would* take place on the date originally planned.

But my dilemma was only just starting. What on earth was I to speak about? I wanted to please both those who expected jokes and verbal fireworks, and those who expected the traditional note of high seriousness. The day before the ceremony I locked myself in my hotel room and worked on my speech. So careful was I to try to strike the right note that I had prepared alternative paragraphs, which could be read without

detriment to the gist of the speech, but which were completely different in tone.

I awoke early, had a light breakfast and dressed ready for the ordeal. When Stephen Goodband, the president of the Students' Council, called in for an exchange of last-minute messages of goodwill, I felt I could allow myself, for once in a way, to break a strict rule and have an early drink to steady my nerves. Then, after a quick glance at my speech, I set off.

There was an interval of pregnant calm in the Principal's office as we waited alone for the members of the Senatus to gather. Shortly before half past eleven, the procession gradually formed up and made its way from the robing rooms to the Mitchell Hall. Black and scarlet robes, hoods of all colours and descriptions, made a gay but impressive scene as the procession passed down the centre aisle towards the platform. At the rear came the Principal in his black and silver robes, and behind him, myself, carrying my gown and mortarboard in my hand. The organ boomed out, and the students' voices surged up in a full-throated rendering of "Gaudeamus Igitur."

I was conscious of a confused and sustained roar, but whether they were cheers or demonstrations of disapproval I did not know and was almost past caring. I could not take my eyes off the magnificent stained-glass window which completely filled the wall behind the platform and dominated the hall, increasing the solemnity of the occasion. At last the slow procession reached the platform, and the ceremony began.

#### Jimmy's Maiden Speech

After a short prayer by the chaplain, I was introduced by the President of the Students' Representative Council. There was a good deal of interrupting during his witty speech, and I noticed some members of the Senatus exchanging glances. I was then called upon to rise, and the president robed me in the scarlet Rectorial gown and placed the black trencher with gold tassel on my head. I was officially installed as Rector of Aberdeen University and moved to the lectern to make my address.

It was with a sense of fatality that I waited for the pandemonium to die down. A little light relief crept into the proceedings when five Divinity students, wearing false moustaches, solemnly approached the platform, salaamed and presented me with a withered bouquet and a life of Oliver Cromwell!

I began by referring to the widespread publicity the ceremony had received and emphasized that I had found it distasteful, since I had not accepted nomination for the sake of publicity, and certainly I had nothing to say to satisfy sensation seekers. I mentioned that I had been called the Radio Rector, and pointed out that it was through this medium that I had become known to the students without ever having set foot in Aberdeen.

I discussed the ubiquity of the wireless set, and warned my audience of "the tangible terrors of television." I pointed out the hypnotic effect of the television screen and my belief that children's listening and viewing should be controlled by the parents. I passed on to the influence of popular entertainment on student life and stressed the importance of extra-curricula activity.

#### Managed To Please Both Sides

Somehow, I managed to steer the right course to avoid the many pitfalls that lay ahead. My speech was sufficiently amusing to keep the students waiting for the next joke, and sufficiently serious to appease the greybeards on the platform behind me, who had been expecting out-and-out buffoonery. It seemed almost too good to be true, but I did manage to achieve this delicate balance.

It had been a very trying position for a comic to be in, and I promised myself never to stretch my luck so far again. And I meant it. You can take that from me.

THE END

"Take It From Me" by Jimmy Edwards is published by T. Werner Laurie at 10s. 6d.

# Too much Lion

by *WILSON MacARTHUR*

ILLUSTRATED BY WILLIAM LITTLE

Fighting down his panic, he laid the trap. He was after a man-eating lion, and the bait was—himself

**J**OHAN DERWENT PARKED the truck under the trees, leaped down and walked swiftly towards the house. His safari boy, scrambling from the back of the truck, sprinted for the back premises with the eagerness of one who bears momentous news.

Molly was at the living-room door, looking relieved.

"Hallo, John. You're late. Anything happen?"

He pulled a crumpled paper out of his bush-shirt pocket and tossed it to her. She sat down on the arm of a chair and read it aloud, her face paling.

"District Officer, Mambara, reports man-eating lions in Aronda area; two, possibly three. Deaths—eighteen—reported from several villages. Proceed immediately to investigate."

"Investigate?" she repeated. "Does that mean—tracking them down?"

"Maybe."

He gloomed at her, standing in the middle of the room with his hands thrust deep into the pockets of his khaki slacks.

"When do you leave?" Molly asked quietly.

"In the morning."

"For how long?"

"No idea. It could be a good many weeks."

She nodded, accepting the situation. "I'll go to Hetty's," she decided.

"Why not up to town, to an hotel?" Derwent objected.

"Not after that trip to Nairobi three months ago, for the Game Conference. We can't afford it, John."

"I suppose not. Sorry, old girl."

She crumpled up the paper in her hand. "Killing lions," she said, with fright in her eyes.

He went and poured himself a stiff whisky, added filtered water.

"It's damned awkward," he cried in a vexed tone. "Coming just now. I might be away for months. And the Ruwengara job will be blowing up next month."

Molly looked away. The Ruwengara job. . . .

Derwent studied his drink. He'd set his heart on that job. He was thirty-eight. Seven more years as a game ranger and . . . without promotion, where was the future in it? Ruwengara meant not just promotion. It was the ideal job for him—a large area including a vast game reserve on the Kenya border, working in with the Kenya blokes, with unlimited opportunities for studying game, for making photographs and cine film, with the odd poacher to add a spice of excitement now and then. A different life, for

Molly as well as himself. More neighbours, not so far to Nairobi when you wanted a spot of civilization. Not that Molly had ever complained about the primitive isolation of the present billet.

He glanced at her. He was proud of her—proud of the way she took things, proud of her guts, her calmness. And she could shoot. Often when he wasn't out on safari she'd go to the range with him for his daily half hour, keeping his eye in. He enjoyed shooting. He prided himself on being a crack shot, on killing humanely, instantaneously. He liked to see the bull blown to bits with six consecutive hits at three hundred yards. It flattered him. He wasn't just a naturalist, a bloke with a butterfly net. He was a naturalist in the bush.

She seemed to read his thoughts, and when she spoke her tone was quiet but heavier. "John, about the Ruwengara job—you're pretty sure you stand a good chance?"

**D**ERWENT was surprised. "Well, Arbuthnot took me with him to the Game Conference. They all listened to me, and Arbuthnot kept consulting me across the table. And you went down jolly well, too. They all liked you." He grinned a little. "Even the women," he added. "And a fellow's promotion as often as not depends on whether people like his wife." Molly nodded almost impatiently. "You've never shot a lion, have you, John?"

"You know I hate killing. I only shoot when I have to, to feed myself and the boys on safari."

She nodded again. "I know. They—they said that, up in Nairobi."

"In Nairobi? Who did?"

"Oh, they—they talked, you know. They said some very nice things about you. And I heard Arbuthnot yarning with that Kenya chap, Mellor. Mellor wanted to know if you were getting the Ruwengara job."

Derwent was looking at her, still surprised, but anxious, too. "You never mentioned this before. What did Arbuthnot say?"

"He said you were a thundering good naturalist, and keen as blazes on your job, and a very nice fellow and all that, but."

"But what?"

"But the man that gets the Ruwengara job may have to go out with some visiting Very Important Personage who's taken a fancy to shoot a lion or an elephant, and he'll have to be somebody that can make sure the V.I.P. gets his bag without getting scared out of his wits or killed in the process. And you'd never shot anything bar small game so of course you'd never



She tried to be easy, casual; he must not see

been charged by a wounded lion or three or four tons of anti-social elephant and so. . . ."

Derwent had gone white. Now two spots of colour came into his cheeks. Angry colour. "So I don't fill the bill, eh? Were they suggesting I was yellow, by any chance?"

Molly's eyes filmed with quick tears. "No, John, not that. But you hadn't the experience—"

"To save the life of some damfool of a dogsboddy who thinks it would be fun to shoot an elephant or a lion and go home and tell his precious pals about it!"

He gulped his whisky, poured another angrily. So this was why Molly hadn't let herself get



was terrified. "Don't go poking around in the bush with man-eating lions about," she told him.

enthusiastic about their chances of the Ruwengara job. And she'd kept it to herself—not wanting to hurt him, he supposed.

"I'm sorry, John," she said gently.

"Oh, hell. . . ."

"Let's not think of it any more. Can I help with your kit?"

He shook his head glumly. "Everything's ready. That's why I was late. I've been over the maps. I'll get down by four o'clock, see the D.O.—"

"Who is he?"

"Young chap called Tomlinson. A bit cocky. The new type of District Officer, full of theories. Regards game rangers as some sort of dirt. He'll

learn. And it won't be 'two, possibly three.' I've got two game scouts down that way. I'll call 'em in and get their reports. They'll be reliable. Anyway they told me six months ago there were man-eaters there. They said at least two dozen people had been killed. Nice to know Tomlinson's heard about it at last."

"I'll see about food," Molly volunteered.

"Do it together," he grunted.

She got her keys and they went to the locked pantry. There were stacks of canned food on the shelves, baskets of fresh fruit and vegetables, a roast haunch of impala in the meat-safe. Between them they packed the steel safari box, and Molly wrapped the meat in cheesecloth. Then the

mpishi announced dinner. They ate, in a long silence. Afterwards, they went early to bed.

Before dawn Molly awoke. Her husband's bed was empty, the mosquito net thrown back. She could hear noises outside, as loads were dumped into the back of the pick-up, which had been built up with a roof, and sides and back doors of heavy chain-link fencing with canvas flaps. John came back as the first faint daylight crept into the room.

"Breakfast," he announced. "Like yours in bed?"

"No, I'll come."

She put on a housecoat over her nightgown and sat down for a moment to tidy her hair, to put on a face, make herself look nice for John before he went away.

She saw him out to the truck. She tried to be easy, casual; he must not see she was terrified.

"Have a nice time, John," she said, with a wry smile, "and for heaven's sake don't go poking around in the bush with man-eating lions prancing about."

"I'll be careful."

He swung up, and grinned down at her as the engine roared. The boys clambered into the back—Maroni the safari boy, and two game scouts.

"Enjoy yourself," she called. "And put both feet on that young ass Tomlinson."

"I will. 'Bye.'"

He waved. The truck shot forward, swung among the trees, went bouncing along the rough track and reached the road.

Derwent drove fast. He was trying to drive faster than his thoughts, to out-distance them. He didn't like this business at all.

**H**E found Tomlinson that night, at a rest house. Tomlinson was on tour. He was young, he was off-hand, he was very conscious of being a person of importance, Lord God Almighty to a few thousand black savages. He gave the game ranger a casual greeting. "Hallo, Derwent. Been sent to do your stuff?"

Derwent looked at him. "Glad you got around to reporting at last," he said coldly.

"What d'you mean, at last?"

"Heard about those killings six months ago. If one understands the people and the dialects, of course, one picks up these things."

Tomlinson did not bat an eyelid. He said easily: "Good. So you know all about it."

Over tea, Derwent got down to business. "I want to see your report," he said abruptly.

Tomlinson dived into a steel dispatch box, dug out a docket and handed it over. Derwent browsed over it. Precious little here, except names of villages. He got out his maps.

In two hours he had the hang of the thing. He could almost pinpoint the hide-out of one bunch of man-eaters. Then his game scouts, sent for urgently, came in.

Dinner grew cold while he took their reports. They were positive. Both were old hands, men of long experience in the department, reliable men. They spoke slowly, confidently, in their own dialect, and Tomlinson listened, gathering one word in ten. Derwent dismissed them and tackled his cold soup, cold roast meat, cold potatoes and cold vegetables. Then, under the light of the pressure lamp, he went back to his maps. Tomlinson sat and watched, highly amused. For himself, work ceased at 4 p.m. He would no sooner have thought of looking at a report or a docket or a map after office hours than he would have thought of starting work before 8 a.m. In the bush or at his *boma* he kept strict hours.

Derwent worked on.

He got his typewriter from the truck and wrote letters. Letters to chiefs and village headmen. He had made a long list, ticking off each name as he remembered it or found it in the files. Literate or illiterate. Able to read English. Unable to read English. Letters in English, letters in Swahili. More than a score of them. That

# POIROT RETURNS!

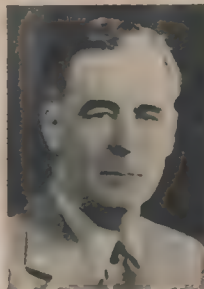
*Great new mystery*  
by **AGATHA CHRISTIE**



*Dapper Poirot: the first stage version, by Charles Laughton*



*Enigmatic Poirot: in 1920 he was played by Francis L. Sullivan*



*Clean-shaven Poirot: Austin Trevor played him in three films*



*... and William Little's masterly characterization for JOHN BULL*

**N**EXT week, JOHN BULL begins publication of a brilliant new mystery by Agatha Christie. It is called **AFTER THE FUNERAL**—and it marks the return of her greatest creation, Hercule Poirot.

The dapper little Belgian with the egg-shaped head and the waxed moustaches is a phenomenon. He was born middle-aged—in 1918, as the result of a bet.

A friend challenged Agatha Christie, then a V.A.D. nurse, to write a story concealing the identity of the murderer until the last page. She accepted. The stake was £100; the result, *The Mysterious Affair At Styles*, starring Hercule Poirot and published in 1920. Poirot was a tremendous success, and as book followed book—there have been twenty-six Poirot novels in all—his fans ran into millions all over the world. Queen Mary, Anthony Eden, Clement Attlee and Wilfred Pickles are four of his keenest fans in this country.

Actors jostled to portray Poirot. The first was Charles Laughton, in 1928. Then came Francis L. Sullivan, and, on the screen, Austin Trevor.

For thirty dynamic years, Poirot pursued crime—and then Agatha Christie retired him.

Today, in retirement, his main interests

are gastronomic. Only a case of the most exceptional interest can draw him from his comfortable home. . . . A case such as that in **AFTER THE FUNERAL**.

JOHN BULL has secured exclusive serial rights in this great novel, and has chosen William Little, one of Britain's leading artists, to portray the new Poirot.

It is a brilliant collaboration. Don't miss the first long instalment of . . .

## **AFTER THE FUNERAL**

IN JOHN BULL NEXT WEEK

would do. The game scouts could take verbal messages for the illiterates. He downed a whisky and went to bed. He growled good night to Tomlinson as he crawled under the mosquito net but got no reply; Tomlinson was fast asleep.

When Maroni brought him his morning tea at five, he, Derwent, was already sitting up, with the net thrown back. By the time breakfast was ready he had given his orders, the two local scouts had gone off. Derwent wolfed his breakfast, shouted goodbye to a still recumbent D.O., and departed.

**I**T took him a week to go round the district. At the end of it his fears were confirmed. He had proof of at least seven different killers—three pairs and one solitary old fellow—and the probability of at least two more. He had proof of ninety-seven deaths in the past nine months. And he had very cold feet.

He sat, under the wide veranda-awning of his tent, staring at his notes, wondering how to word his report; and he thought of those lions.

He had never shot a lion. He had never been charged by a lion. He knew damn-all about

charging lions, bar that the tail went up at the crucial moment. Between the eyes? That was chancy. In the chest? Never stop 'em like that.

He was sweating a little. Seven lions, perhaps nine. This wasn't one man's job. It wanted organization. And it was the ruddy government's fault.

He was still sweating over the wording of his report when he heard a car approaching.

"Damn," he said aloud. "If it's that young whelp Tomlinson. . . ."

It was. Tomlinson on his way home to his comfortable bungalow at the end of his tour. Tomlinson full of zeal and righteousness and indignation at finding Derwent quietly in camp, instead of tearing through the bush shooting man-eating lions.

He told him the position, quietly and with studious calm. He also told him why he thought the lions had become man-eaters.

"You call every damned native with a hoe a farmer, and then you say the farmer has got to protect his crops from the depredations of wild animals, and you let him have a rifle, and he goes cracking off at every poor beast that

comes near his shamba. And when, by a stroke of luck, he kills one, what does he do? He eats it. And when he's eaten it he thinks that was a damned sight easier than tilling the soil, so he keeps at it, and by and by there's neither hoof nor hide to be found. But he's not the only bloke that likes game to eat. There's the lions. And the lions can't find anything to eat because the ruddy natives have shot the lot, so they get desperate and one fine day they try eating natives instead. And then you have the nerve to send for the Game Department to clear up your mess."

He had become suddenly angry as he talked, and Tomlinson had no chance to break in. Now the District Officer, glaring, began to reply.

"Shut up," Derwent snapped. "I'm busy."

He put a sheet of paper into the typewriter and began hammering the keys. Tomlinson went off in a huff. Good riddance.

"Evidence of at least seven man-eating lions and lionesses," he wrote. "At least two more possibles. See appendix A attached. Evidence of at least ninety-seven deaths. See details, appendix B. Concentrated in an area covering a radius of seven miles from this point. See appendix C, sketch map. Recommendations. . . ."

He stopped there. He had to think. Killers—in the bush. Seven of them, maybe nine. And one man with a rifle. And the government didn't insure his life. If he got killed, Molly would get a pension—not enough to live on these days. He thought of Molly, pitchforked back into the mess and tension of modern civilization, trying to find herself a job. It terrified him. And himself—loving his life, loving the bush, the game, the safaris—and Molly. A sudden movement in the grass, a sudden pounce, the hot rancid smell of breath in your face. He'd seen lions kill, often enough.

He began typing quickly.

"Recommendations: The number, skill and confidence of these animals make it unlikely that their destruction could be undertaken without a properly organized drive. At least ten reliable rifles would be required, with a hundred or more beaters armed with spears. Time reckoned to complete the drive: nine weeks. Awaiting instructions."

That let him out. He wouldn't mind hunting lion—with plenty of company. He elaborated it into officialese, drafted his appendices and sat back. Nothing to do now but wait. He had got himself out of this jam rather neatly.

**W**AITING was pleasant. He had brought a small metal box full of his latest batches of notes and photographs which all had to be filed and checked. He planned to have, before he retired, the most complete documentation on the wild life of East Africa that had ever been prepared. If he was left in peace to get on with it.

He spent a happy ten days. Then the reply came. It was brief, it was authoritative and it was precise. It read:

"Noted. Proceed without delay to destroy all man-eating lions in the area."

He sat back. His face was white as a sheet.

"Maroni!" he yelled suddenly.

The safari boy materialized.

"Whisky."

The whisky didn't do any good. *Destroy all man-eating lions. Walk off into the bush and call. Nice lion, come here, then; come and be shot, you bastard.* He shouted for Maroni again.

"Maroni," he said solemnly, "we have orders to kill all the lions."

The safari boy started. "Bwana?"

"You heard me. I want all the game scouts."

They came, at the double, looking apprehensive. Derwent talked to them. Then he spread out his map and he and the head boy crouched over it.

The head boy was not enthusiastic. "Too

*Continued on page 37*

# Flying cameraman gets a new angle

by KEITH ELLIS

**Most jobs are tricky for Terence Soames. He's the man who's called in to get the picture when all other means have failed**

**F**ROM HIS SEAT next to the pilot in the tiny Auster Autocrat, Terence Soames thought it was a very handsome power station. It had a fine square front about a hundred feet high and a three-hundred-foot chimney immediately behind. The British Electricity Authority also thought it was handsome, and wanted it photographed. Unfortunately, the space in front was so cluttered with spare building materials, debris and huts that a ground shot was impossible. They had called in Soames to take a photograph from the air.

The plane circled lower. Denys Martin, the pilot, noticed that the gap between the factory and a 110-foot crane in front of it was only a hundred feet. "Can we make it?" asked Soames. Martin nodded, and Soames opened the starboard window and raised his camera. The plane was now flying lower than the roof of the factory. Martin flew down one side and swung across the front. As he squeezed through the gap, Soames fixed his eye to the viewfinder, swung the camera to counteract the speed of the plane, and pressed the button.

"That was one of our trickiest jobs," says Soames. His jobs tend to be tricky, because people hire aerial photographers only when other means fail. He has flown round the inside of a quarry to get shots of the strata, and circled a television mast for close-ups of the top. A steel company asked for a shot of their works just as the furnace was being tapped at 4 p.m. "We were overhead dead on time," says Soames, "but they were a few seconds late. We crawled along. I got my first shot just as the molten stream struck the bottom of the cauldron. It was like gold on black velvet."

## An Artist By Temperament

Such a phrase is typical of the man. Whether the subject is a mountain or a sewage farm, he strives for—and usually achieves—a pleasing picture. "He's an artist," says John Eede, managing director of the Cardiff firm which employs Soames. Certainly he has the artistic temperament, and he works until three o'clock in the morning on a job that takes his fancy. At forty-four, he still cultivates an appearance that most people associate with artists. In dress, he favours spotted bow-ties, blazers and fancy socks. He tends to be absent-minded. "But in the air," says Eede, "he's a changed man."

Invariably he sits on the starboard side of the cockpit and directs the pilot with hand signals to the height and position he wants. Most shots are taken on sharp turns to starboard, with the engine throttled back so that the speed of the plane is reduced. As each subject is taken from half a dozen angles at heights between fifty feet and 15,000, the evolutions of the tiny plane sicken inexperienced flyers. "Every passenger we've carried has been airsick," says Soames.

An average photographing session of two and

a half hours on every day of the week on which air photography is possible gives Soames a yearly aggregate of something like five hundred flying hours and a thousand feet of exposed film. He has produced crop records for farmers, an aerial survey of the site for a new town, close-ups of Cardiff city centre for a proposed one-way traffic system, and periodical progress shots of work on scores of building sites. One steel company wanted a view of its three main works, which stretch four and a half miles across a South Wales town. The Ministry of Transport wanted shots of road bends and surfaces for a road safety campaign. Advertisers frequently order views of buildings, scenery and historic towns. So do the publishers of guide-books and picture postcards.

When Cardiff city police wanted to study crowd packing and traffic control at football matches, Soames was able to help with a shot of the Cardiff ground and its approaches at the very height of the chaos before a big match. A regional board wanted to prove to its superiors in London that there was just no room for a proposed installation on a strip of coast. A panoramic aerial view clinched its argument.

## Helping The Pilot To Land

Though he held a pilot's licence before the war and sometimes took photographs while actually piloting, Soames no longer does this. He still finds his knowledge of flying useful, however. Some time ago, his regular pilot was unable to fly and recommended a friend who was just out of the R.A.F. Soames took his photographs and asked the new pilot to land. Unfortunately, the pilot was used to flying fast Service machines, and brought the Auster down at a speed of 120 miles an hour instead of the usual fifty or sixty. The plane hit the grass and bounced straight into the air. Soames was holding the camera in his lap, and it jerked up and gashed his chin, making a permanent scar. As the pilot zoomed up to try again, Soames told him: "Use your brake-flaps next time. Use your brake-flaps!" The pilot's face was tense. "I've never flown a plane with brake-flaps," he said.

They came in to land again. Seeing that the pilot still was not using his flaps, Soames held his camera tight against the floor. The plane again hit the grass at 120 miles an hour, and again bounced straight into the air. Soames's camera nearly crashed through the floor. The pilot got the plane back in the air for a third attempt.

Soames's chin was dripping blood. "For God's sake, take it easy," he said. "Use the flaps and trim your tail." This time the pilot obeyed, but roared in to land at full throttle. Soames leaned over and knocked the throttle down. They were only thirty feet over an allotment adjoining the airfield. "We glided down beautifully," says Soames. "It was the first time I'd ever interfered with a pilot."

Usually, however, Soames concentrates on



Soames, holding camera, ready to take off with his pilot, Denys Martin. He takes his best pictures flying in rain and strong wind



Soames and Martin fly in for a radar mast close-up. Shots are taken on sharp turns

# LIFE WITH FATHER

**F**ATHER has never interfered too much in my choice of boy friends, but there are a few types of male he does not like, and one of these decided to propose to me two years ago, while Daddy and I were in the same show in Australia.

I did not want to marry the lad, and I was so certain my father would not consider him that, when the proposal came, I said, "Maybe," adding very dutifully, "but you'll have to ask my father. I'm only sixteen."

The ordeal, I thought, would put off any man. But that one was made of determined stuff—more so, I'm afraid, than Daddy, who became so embarrassed that he hurriedly assented and rushed out of the hotel. "But why didn't you turn him down?" I asked, when I explained my predicament. "Why didn't you just say no?"

"How could I say no?" he replied. "He didn't want to marry me!"

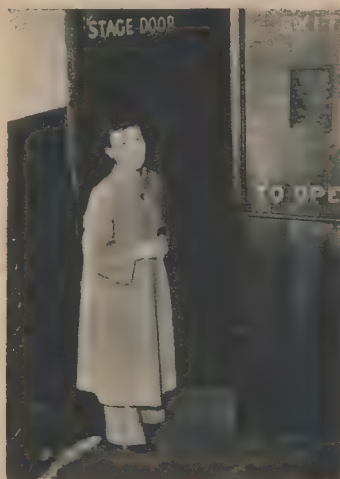
As long as I can remember, my father has been a top-liner. He had merely to mention on the air that he lacked something to bring a spate of parcels in the post. Once he said he had never tried winkles; next day a large crate arrived, and winkles poured out on to the floor as it was opened.

I was five when he accidentally disillusioned me about Santa Claus. The costume wasn't big enough, and as I ran round the back of the red-robed figure with the toys I found Daddy's familiar posterior where the ends of the robe didn't quite meet.

We lived in Oxford for some of my childhood years. Daddy believed in nature baths. In the summer, whenever it rained at weekends, we'd get into bathing costumes and play games on the lawn in the rain. Fortunately, the next door neighbour was Jack Hylton. He understood.

I had a pony called Betty, a very sweet-natured animal that had been trained in a circus. After much persuasion my father agreed to get up on her; though he has the figure of a jockey he can't ride for toffee. The moment he was up somebody turned on the wireless in the kitchen. It was circus music, and Betty began prancing round in a circle, with her rider hanging on to her mane for dear life and shouting for the music to be turned off.

I'd be a vet today—or at least on the way to becoming one—if



my father hadn't deliberately pushed me into the theatre. He had always wanted somebody in the family to talk shop with, and my mother couldn't have cared less.

If he came home complaining that so-and-so had trodden in on his laugh, instead of being justifiably furious, she would say patiently: "Does it really matter? There'll be other audiences."

My own reactions at twelve were hardly promising. On being asked what I thought of Dad in the Command Performance of 1946, I replied: "I didn't get a spoon with my ice cream."

Thinking back, I can see how he plotted and planned, tempting me with all the attractions of theatrical life at an age when it was quite impossible to resist.

I went to school in Shanklin, Isle of Wight. One year the Ventnor Repertory Company had difficulty in casting a juvenile part in one of Emlyn Williams's plays, and the headmistress agreed to let some of her girls be auditioned. I got the part, and found myself being excused lessons, allowed to lie on in bed every morning, rest in the afternoon, and stay out late at night.

Father scarcely missed a performance, having saved me from catastrophe on the first night. I had to make an exit, but the door stuck and the entire cast stood transfixed while I struggled desperately with the door knob. "Try pushing it," Daddy hissed from the front row of the stalls. I did. The door flew open, knocking over a table covered with bells. But I had got off the set, and the action could continue.

Who are the famous father and daughter? Turn to page 39 for their names—and the complete photograph

stations, airfields and docks on which there may be a security ban.

Another sideline is news work for the press. Two years ago, a newspaper asked Soames to find and photograph a thirteen-year-old girl who had been lost at sea on a raft. For a whole day, he zigzagged up and down the Channel from Bristol to Lundy. The girl was never found. When he heard of the wreck of the Samtampa off Porthcawl in April, 1947, he went down for pictures. It was an appalling day, and though the pilot was willing to fly low, Soames decided it would be too dangerous. They got some next day, but by then the crew were dead.

A shot of the wreckage of the Tudor aircraft in which eighty people lost their lives three years ago brought him £50 from a morning newspaper which splashed it across the front page. Soames handed over the whole sum to

a fund opened for the dependants of the victims. "I draw the line at making money out of air crashes," he says. Curiously enough, the same crash inspired Denys Martin to learn to fly. "I thought it was time more people knew something about flying."

The strangest example of a windfall order was when a man came in with a newspaper cutting of a photograph of the Springbok game. "I want some copies of this," he told Eede, "I can see myself on it." Eede was surprised. He pointed out that there were 60,000 people in the crowd. "Surely you must be mistaken," he said. The man whipped out a magnifying glass. "Look, that's me—at the back there, standing on a box." Eede examined the photograph carefully. "So it is!" he exclaimed. "I can see a smut on your nose." The man bought half a dozen copies to show his friends. THE END

"But I've only just made it—it must be FRESH TEA!"



Not a moment is lost...

NOT necessarily, madam! You see, the great point is—was the tea fresh in the packet when you bought it? That freshness makes *all* the difference.

Brooke Bond is fresh tea.

Specially lined chests keep the freshness of Brooke Bond tea sealed for its journey from India and Ceylon. At this side, as soon as those chests are opened, the tea is blended, packed, and rushed *direct* to your grocer with utmost speed.

Every week, in city, town, and village, the familiar red vans are to be seen calling at grocers with fresh stocks of Brooke Bond tea.

Buy one of the popular Brooke Bond blends—make a pot of tea—and you'll agree there's a lot more in Brooke Bond freshness than you ever dreamed of.



from the plucking of the tea in India and Ceylon... to the opening of the chests, the blending, packing...



and delivery to your grocer in the little red van.



'Two leaves and a bud.' The symbol of Brooke Bond service throughout the world

Get fresh ideas  
about tea—buy  
**Brooke Bond**

**FRESHER, BETTER,**

**because it comes to you quicker**

## FORTUNE IS A WOMAN

Continued from page 14

of what I would find. I felt cold and curiously alone.

If Sarah had been with me it would have been different. But she'd gone. I felt as if something had happened to her, so that already, instead of my having seen her twelve hours ago, days had passed.

As I came through Sladen and turned up the lane to Lowis, my heart began to thump. It was the first time I'd been to the Manor since the fire. "There's the old stone-built hall," Michael had said, "and, of course, the stables. And part of the kitchens were saved."

For some reason, I hadn't counted on the gatehouse. It was a shock, like seeing something you never expected to see again. I drove past it and stopped the car exactly where I'd put it in May on the night of the fire. I got out and my hand fumbled with the keys and nearly dropped them. The trees were dripping. I climbed the hedge in the same place and made a stumbling way round to the drive. It was all the same: that was what surprised me—the holly hedge, the garden. . . . As I turned the corner of the drive, I could see a light.

JUST for a second, I got the feeling that the fire, and everything that came after it, was a sort of confidence trick, and that I could make out the low straggling shape of the house, the tall, grouped chimneys and the timbered walls, the overgrown yew and the irregular windows with their leaded panes; and that when I went up to the door, Trixie, the spaniel, and her owner would be waiting to greet me.

Then the feeling passed and I blinked my eyes and could see that where the house should have been was a great gap. A tooth had been pulled out of the countryside.

The stables and the old hall were unlighted: the light came from the back of the house. I went slowly across the gravel drive and came to the place where the front door had been. I stepped over the threshold among the rubble and the weeds. There were bits of flooring, treacherous, pot-holed; planks across a crater which must have been part of the cellars. You could just pick out the design, the layout as it had once been. The body had been here, and the broken balustrade . . . across the stairs and back door to the kitchens. . . . It was the rooms at the back, attached to the old hall, which had escaped. The light was in an upstairs room.

I tried a window. It was a sash window and slithered up without much sound. As I put my foot over the sill a dog began to bark. It was Trixie.

I waited a bit to see if she would quieten down, but she went on. I slid my leg over and climbed in. Immediately, all around me in the indoor air, was the heavy smell of herbal cigarettes. I stood there and straightened up. I was in a passage. At the end of it were stairs leading up, and at the top was a door with a crack of light underneath. My own breathing didn't seem to be working properly.

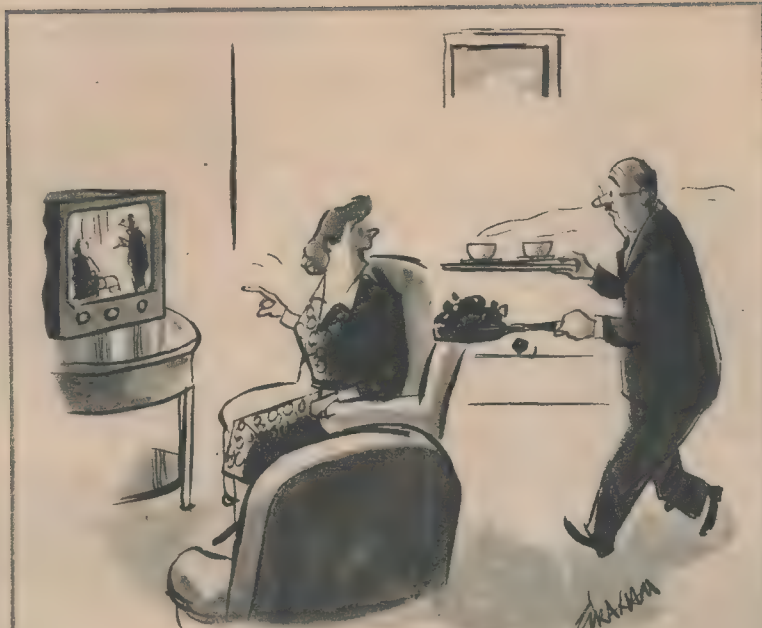
Trixie was downstairs somewhere, shut in a room. Suddenly she stopped, and the place was quiet. It was far more silent than the damp night outside. I went up the stairs, leaden-footed, like a deep-sea diver. I put my hand on the door handle, but for a second couldn't turn it. I was more frightened than I'd ever been in my life before.

I pulled myself together at last, and the handle turned. I went in.

It was part of the old house, you could tell by the beams, the window; used as a living-room now; fire burned in the hearth; a radio; papers and a cushion on the floor; it was empty. There was another room beyond, half lit, the door open; I could see a chair, the corner of a bed.

I thought at first that there was complete silence, except for the crackling of the fire, but it wasn't so. I heard it. I heard the asthmatic breathing again.

I shut the door behind me. There was a stick behind the door. I picked it up, went across the room. I don't think it was for attack. I needed



"Remember David and Anne were going to be married? Well, Anne broke it off after Sir George was murdered, so David went off to London, and who should he meet but Peter, who's convinced that it *wasn't* Henderson who shot Sir George, and suspects De Silva. This is Peter's West End flat, and Spike's behind that curtain with a gun . . .!"

defence, just as I'd needed it once before, to fend off the unnamable.

Again I heard it—that stertorous breathing. Sweating with fear, I gripped the stick and went in. A woman came slowly towards me. It was Sarah. I looked past her. In an armchair was an old woman. In the dim light from a shaded bulb the furniture made gaunt shadows. With sudden panic I swung to look behind the door. No one.

Sarah said: "Oliver! How did you—"

The old woman said: "You're just in time."

It was Mrs. Moreton.

I said: "Where's . . . ?" and stopped as Sarah sharply raised a hand.

Mrs. Moreton said: "Your—wife . . . your wife has been here for two hours, persuading me, insisting, dictating terms. . . ."

Sarah said gently: "Oh, my dear, you mustn't say that. Persuading, perhaps. . . . Loyalty isn't something only within a family. . . ."

So it was Mrs. Moreton breathing like that. I stared at her and stared at her and then stared at Sarah. I'd never seen Sarah look so tired, so drawn.

"Loyalty," said Mrs. Moreton, and coughed, and took a minute to snatch her breath. "Loyalty should be in thought as well as in act. Ever since you met this man, ever since he first came to the house, your—your allegiance was divided. You let Tracey down when he most needed help—not in a common way—oh, I know there was no misconduct. But the betrayal of sympathy, of understanding."

"My understanding!" said Sarah. "Where was *his* before ever Oliver came to the house? You woke and discovered the first fire and suspected it, quarrelled with him about it, lied to me about the quarrel, made an excuse. . . . Where was *his* trust in me—preparing that fire, making me the dupe? Or *yours*, discovering it and then helping to hide the truth—before I ever saw Oliver?"

"I hoped it would stop there. He was my *son*, Sarah. I couldn't tell you, and I didn't press him to tell you; hoping as I did. . . ." Mrs. Moreton stopped and sighed, got slowly to her feet. "Oh, well. We have been over this before. I'm ready to go. . . ."

It was then that I truly saw the ruin she had become. Her hair was colourless, smoky white. She'd fallen away to bone: cheek-bone and wrist-bone and long-jointed fingers. She struggled for every breath.

"Mrs. Moreton—"

Sarah made a quick gesture to stop

me, but Mrs. Moreton turned. "You've come at the end of a battle, Mr. Branwell. Sarah has been fighting hard for you—and only you. She's had no one else in mind. I'm tired of fighting, and so I have lost."

Vast relief was creeping into me, like blood coming back.

Sarah said: "I've been trying to tell Mrs. Moreton how it has been with us ever since we were married, how one thing has piled on another, so that you're likely to be ruined and perhaps arrested, too. I've been—trying so hard to convince her that I played fair with Tracey, and that we'd both do *anything* to save his good name if it can possibly be done."

I said: "You were in the house that night?"

Mrs. Moreton met my look without a flicker. "It was my responsibility—all of it."

"Oh, no," said Sarah impatiently. "It's *not* true, and you know it. And the end—that was an accident. The purest misfortune."

"What happened?" I said. "Why were you here? Good Lord, I can't believe it!"

The fact that I was really upset may have touched her. Her gaunt face looked a bit softer. "You can tell him about it, Sarah, when this is all over. He knows all that is necessary to know for the present. I'll trouble you for my stick, Mr. Branwell."

I held it out to her, still stupefied. "Where are you going?"

"To London. Sarah wishes me to make a statement to the police. . . ."

The old lady went out. As Sarah came up to me she stumbled and I caught her arm. "Oh, darling. . . ."

She shook her head. "Not now. I'm all right."

At the second door Mrs. Moreton was waiting for us. "What else is it you want him to know?"

Sarah said: "That it was my letter that brought you back before the fire." She turned to me. "I'd written to her, Oliver, on the Thursday, saying we were going away for a holiday. I thought nothing of it: I didn't know Tracey hadn't told her. It made her suspect. . . . Ever since that first fire she'd been anxious, watching him, afraid he might attempt it again. So she came back on Saturday, got here about seven, found Tracey here, just leaving. . . ."

There was a short silence. Mrs. Moreton's face had a kind of nobility, a hard, unattached look, like a death mask.

The old lady said: "When I got

here, he had his coat on, was going to the stables for the car. I knew at once from his face what he meant to do. I told him I had come back for the weekend. He said it was impossible, there was no staff, no food. Tracey stayed on with me, trying to hide his impatience, thinking perhaps I could still be persuaded to go.

"I went upstairs to my room. Tracey followed me, wanted me to go to Yorkshire with him. I refused. By then my asthma was coming on. He said I must be out of my mind to risk my health for a silly fad. I said my fad was my suspicion of what he intended to do. . . . Then he lost his temper, said unforgivable things and shouted at me that he had already done it, that the fuses were already lit when I came in; in another hour. . . ."

The old lady paused, but her voice was quite firm. "Still in anger, he went to his own room, began dragging out some curtains which had been in a drawer. I followed him, almost as angry as he. In the end I caught his arm. I'm quite strong. . . . we struggled and fell. We both fell. Tracey underneath."

She stopped for breath again.

"I think I fainted. . . . At least, when I could move, it was nearly dark. The lights wouldn't work. I'd hurt my arm. I struggled into the kitchen to try and find the main switch. Then you rang the bell. My only regret since is that I didn't stay in the house with the fire. . . ."

I cleared my throat. "And after?"

"I walked over to Elliott the butler's cottage. It's only four miles away. He dressed my arm for me. I spent the night there."

"What did you tell him?"

"I told him the truth. . . ."

We stood in complete silence for a minute.

"Well," said Mrs. Moreton, "I am very tired. Please let us go now."

I got the car and brought it round to where the front of the house had been. They were waiting for me in the fine drizzle.

Trixie yelped and wagged her tail. I opened the back door for Mrs. Moreton, and helped her in. Sarah made a move to follow, but Mrs. Moreton waved her to sit in front. Trixie scrambled in at the back.

I started up. In the mirror I could see the tall, quiet figure in the corner of the back seat. I didn't know how much she could hear or what she thought.

"The asthma. I've never seen her with it before," I whispered.

"Oh, yes. She couldn't stay in Kent in the pollen season. May and June. That was why she went away each year. But now, it has been like this ever since, she says. The shock, I suppose."

On the better road I put my foot down on the accelerator. Sarah turned. "Is your breathing better?"

Mrs. Moreton said: "It will do."

Sarah turned to me again. She said softly: "I went to Shanklin first. She left Victor's on Monday." Victor was Tracey's barrister brother: the old lady had been staying with him. "I suppose she called at our flat then, found us out, took Trixie. Victor thought she'd gone to the Isle of Wight. Coming here afterwards was a guess. I only got here at seven. I knew the one chance—the only chance was to get her alone."

"I still don't know how—"

"At first she denied everything. But I knew her. I knew that if she could be made to understand, fully, all that I felt, all that was at stake. . . . She'd got it all so twisted. There's no real evil in her, Oliver. It was partly Clive's fault. She's often visited him since Tracey's death, and after we were married he tried to put all sorts of suspicions into her head. She's no idea of *his* part in the fraud, nor he of her presence at the fire. But the one thing I hadn't reckoned on was Victor."

"Victor?"

"She says that if this comes out it will affect his career—in parliament—or his chances of becoming a judge. I hadn't realized that. Victor was always her favourite. All along her greatest anxiety has been for him, to protect

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him. I thought I'd lost. I thought I couldn't move her."

I said: "How did you, in the end?"  
"I knew too much. So much fitted. I threatened that if she didn't go to the police and tell the truth, I'd make a statement myself—to the papers as well as the police. I said that if you were going down, she would as well—and Tracey's memory and Victor's good name. I made her see that this way would mean the least publicity. I promised her that this way we'd do all we could. Need it be made public, Oliver?"

"It's a police matter. I don't know. We'll have to see."

**W**e turned out into the main London road. There was silence for a while, except for the hum of the car and the hiss of the tyres on the wet road.

In the back Trixie began to whine. I looked in the mirror and saw that Mrs. Moreton had moved to the other corner.

I said: "Sarah . . . that note you left."

"I'm sorry. It wasn't explicit. But it couldn't be. I couldn't be sure then. It was something I had to face alone."

"I thought—I thought that Tracey was alive."

"Oh, Oliver."

"That was the chief thing—like a nightmare. Now that I know the truth, nothing else seems to matter. So long as I haven't lost you."

After a minute she said: "In no possible case would you have lost me. That's what I want you to know."

I couldn't speak. We drove on in silence for a while.

There wasn't much traffic about, and I know it happened just about Farningham.

The rain had stopped and the road was straight and wide, and I suppose we were doing about fifty. Some flicker of light from a cottage made me glance in the mirror to see if it was a car behind. Then I saw that Mrs. Moreton was no longer in her corner. I shifted my head to see the other corner. As I did so there was a violent gust of wind, a scared yelp from Trixie; a cry—and then a cry from Sarah. The car swerved even before I braked, the open door like a sail. Then the braking skid and scream of tyres . . . let off the brake, too late. . . . We'd spun right round, were going off the road. Hedges and a tree rushing madly at us . . . through them and over . . . something smashing into the engine and the night turning in a somersault of flying fields; then crash. . . .

I was out of the car, on the ground. Trixie was barking. I got up on my hands and knees and saw the wrecked car lying on its side. The grass in the field was heavy with rain. I wanted to lie down in it to stop my head from throbbing. I crawled to the car and it was all dark. Trixie was still inside.

"Sarah!" I said.

The wing had been wrenched off, and the front wheel looked like the wheel of a racing car. I pulled myself up by it, and it turned in my hands. I moved round the front of the car. Through the starred windscreen I could see Sarah's face.

I crawled round to her side, but there seemed no way to get at her because her door was now undermost. Trixie was scuffling in the back, and I saw her lick Sarah's face. The sunshine roof.

I groped about and found a big stone and began blindly hacking at the roof. After a couple of minutes I'd made a big dent but no break in the metal. I hadn't got the strength. I was sobbing with the exertion and with frustration.

I got another stone, sharper, and tried again. The metal split: I could see the wood strips of the frame. I pushed my hand in and wormed my fingers round, but couldn't reach the catch. I hacked at the wood but could not budge it, attacked the roof in a new place, made a second hole.

Even then it wasn't easy. The catch was rigid, as if jammed; my wet fingers slipped on it. At last it turned; but then the roof had to be lifted before it would slide back. I couldn't get the right leverage. Somebody was panting in the darkness. I pushed my other

hand through and pulled with all my strength and the thing moved. Then it slowly slid open, and in another second my hands were on Sarah's hair. Not dead. In fact, she stirred as my fingers touched her face.

In a queer way that shook me out of my own shock, I knew then there was everything still to lose. In a panic I began to talk to her, stroke her face, try to revive her; shouted angrily at Trixie because she wanted to wriggle through, at last got my hands under Sarah's armpits, tried to drag her out. She wouldn't come. The second time I pulled at her, she groaned.

It seemed to be one of her feet that was stuck, or at least somewhere below the knee. Then I heard voices and shouted back. It was somebody out of one of the cottages, a young man with spectacles. He came slithering down through the broken hedge, stopped a minute, staring, came on and saw me.

"I say, there; do you want help?"

"My wife," I said. "She's hurt and I can't get her out! Can you fetch a doctor—and an ambulance—at once?"

It was at that moment that I caught the glint of Sarah's eyes. She said:

"Hallo. . . ."

"Sarah. . . . Are you—"

"I'm all right, Oliver."

"Any—pain?"

"My legs feel a bit queer."

"Oh, God, darling, it was my fault: I didn't realize, and she jumped and the car skidded and—and—"

"Yes, I know. What happened to her?"

I thought the young man had gone, but he'd come round the other side of the car and swung himself up on to the top. The door was free, and he shone a light through it down into the car upon Sarah. After a minute he said in a different voice: "It's the dashboard—been crushed right down. But I think we can manage it. I'll nip home for a crowbar."

I said: "Get a doctor. Are you on the phone?"

"No," he said. "But the place next door is. Don't worry. I've sent my brother to do that."

**N**EXT morning I was twenty minutes late for the meeting. They were all there waiting for me, and it was pretty clear some of them weren't too pleased at having to wait. Berkeley Reckitt and Rawson, McDonald's directors, had turned up, and the two Abercrombies, and Charles Robinson, the underwriter, and Spenser, the man from the Fire Loss Adjusters Association—a red-faced chap of about sixty with a way of closing his eyes unexpectedly in the middle of a sentence.

Reckitt had sent out for coffee and everyone was standing round drinking it and chatting. Michael Abercrombie came straight across to me, and asked if I was all right. I said yes, I was all right.

I don't remember much about the way it began. I remember taking a seat just by one corner of a desk and seeing McDonald at the opposite

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#### Got an idea?

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by **ROFFE THOMPSON**



corner and Spenser behind it, where I suppose Reckitt usually sat. The others had settled as they pleased, and Spenser had set the ball rolling by saying something about family squabbles being no excuse for rather solemn meetings like this; but he understood the case raised far more important issues than a scuffle in a washroom—then there was a disturbance and Henry Dane came in. Apparently nobody expected him and there wasn't a chair for him, but he wouldn't have one brought and stood by the fireplace leaning against the mantelpiece and filling his pipe and scowling.

THEY started talking about the brawl, and I know Charles Robinson joined in; but all the time I was thinking about last night when I had my arm round Sarah and we couldn't get her out, and the man came back with the crowbar and at first I wouldn't let him use it because I was afraid of injuring Sarah's legs more. And Sarah kept asking about Mrs. Moreton, as if she were more important; and then someone came along and shouted that there was a woman dead on the road half a mile back.

McDonald was saying: "If Branwell thinks I've got some axe to grind or old score to pay off he's mistaken. Perhaps it's unusual for a—a broker to concern himself closely with investigating a possible fraud; but in the circumstances it seemed my duty to go on with it. The suspicious facts had come only to my notice. Either I did something about them—personally—or I ignored them, in which case I was surely letting down the things we stand for as a special business community, whichever branch of it we happen to be in. As for the rumours—if they got out they were not of my deliberate spreading. He surely has only himself to blame."

He went on to talk about the beginning of his suspicions.

... When the ambulance came they decided the easiest way to get Sarah out was to put the car on its four wheels again. They did it as gently as they knew how, six of them altogether; my heart and stomach went with it as the car moved.

Spenser had asked me something. "I'm sorry," I said.

"As I mentioned when we began, Mr. Branwell, the only purpose of this meeting is to try to clear up these points as they are raised. Could you help us now by letting us have your view on them?"

I was feeling sick. "My view on them..." McDonald's got his facts right but his inference wrong."

Spenser shut his eyes. "D'you mean you don't deny that you were on the scene of the fire that night?"

"No. I don't deny it." I made an effort to concentrate, trying to forget last night.

Then, abruptly, I went on to tell them the rest, disjointedly, just as it came into my head.

I got through it somehow, but stopped short at last night. I wanted to keep Mrs. Moreton out of it. If I started talking about the accident it somehow seemed to be demanding sympathy, and that was putting the wrong slant on it. That was why I'd told

Michael to say nothing to the others.

When I finished as far as I was going, I got out a cigarette and lit it and snapped the lighter shut and stared at the glowing end. Nobody spoke.

There would have to be an inquest on Mrs. Moreton. Suicide while the balance of her mind was disturbed. The usual easy get-out. She'd been perfectly balanced till the end—had carefully tied Trixie in the car before opening the door. It had been quite deliberate.

I heard Spenser say: "Well, you've certainly given us a lot to think about, Mr. Branwell. I confess your story has surprised me in some of its aspects."

Reckitt coughed dryly and put a finger inside his collar. "Surprising is hardly the word, is it? On your own admission—and accepting this story at its face value—you stumbled upon the fraud, were actually at the scene of it, and yet you did nothing at all about it for four months. Your own firm represented us—dealt with the claim, yet you didn't raise a finger to prevent the payment of a large sum of money in settlement. That's a very peculiar admission, Mr. Branwell."

"Yes," I said.

"And then, four months later—after marrying the widow of this Tracey Moreton, and laying your hands on twenty-eight thousand pounds fraudulently come by—you ask us to believe that you intended to pay this money back, even though you've so far made no attempt to do so. Is that what you say?"

"I don't ask you to believe it. It happens to be the truth."

RAWSON fiddled with his glasses. "I'm still not altogether clear about this. Mr. Branwell admits that he failed in his duty to the insurance world. But there was surely a—wider duty, as a citizen, to give evidence at an inquest, to tell the police of his finding the body of this man Moreton. How does Branwell explain that?"

I put the cigarette down. My hands were still not quite steady. "It may look as if there are two issues now; but there was only one then. I thought Moreton's wife was involved in the fraud and I wasn't ready to denounce her. That's all there is to it. But I'm not here this morning to excuse myself. I'm here to explain. My failure as an ordinary person is something I've already acknowledged, in the proper quarter. I'm here now to talk about my failure as an insurance adjuster."

I looked at McDonald, but he wasn't looking my way. "I've given the matter a good bit of thought during the—before coming here this morning; and it seemed to me there was only one very obvious thing to do. So I phoned Michael Abercrombie a couple of hours ago and asked him to accept my resignation from the firm."

A clock outside was striking twelve. It reminded me of the hospital clock I'd heard every hour through the night.

They were talking about me; there was a general murmur of voices; and Michael was explaining something, and Reckitt was nodding in agreement.

"Just a minute," said Henry Dane and bent to knock out his pipe. I think it was quite accidental; but it was just

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"I didn't see anything I didn't like"

like a judge's gavel bringing the court to order. "Aren't we going a bit fast? And being very one-sided? It's partly Branwell's fault for giving such a lame-duck account of himself; but even in the police courts we try to make allowances for a bad witness. Now—what was that you were muttering a minute ago, Oliver? Something about having made your apologies elsewhere?"

"Not apologies," I said. "I made a full statement to the police."

"When?"

"About two hours ago. That was what made me late getting here."

"Why this morning? Has there been some other development?"

So I told them all about Sarah's visit to Louis Manor last night, and what Mrs. Moreton had said and how it fitted in with what I knew and made an understandable whole. I told them about her jumping out of the car on the way back, and the car crash that followed. I explained I'd spent the night in hospital and come straight on here.

Afterwards there was an uncomfortable silence for a minute or so.

Mr. Abercrombie said: "But why didn't you explain this when you came in? How is your wife?"

"She's got a broken leg and concussion. They say—the house surgeon says—she'll be all right."

Dane said: "And Mrs. Moreton is dead?"

"Yes." Trust him to see the point.

"Did she give you any corroborative evidence of what she said?"

"The servant, Elliott, can confirm a good bit—if he will. She stayed with him that night of the fire."

"Were there any witnesses of the car accident?"

"A man on a bicycle saw Mrs. Moreton fall out."

"Thank God for that," Dane said vigorously. "What did the police say? Did you see Sergeant Barnes?"

"Yes. I made the statement to him. He seemed fairly satisfied."

"You see, it wasn't so difficult after all."

Spenser coughed. "Have you had something to do with this case before today, Mr. Dane?"

"Yes, of course I have. That's why I was advising you not to jump to conclusions. Branwell's acted like a damned fool, but never like a rogue."

Mr. Abercrombie said: "D'you mean he's consulted you on this?"

"Almost from the beginning."

"And acted on your advice?" asked Reckitt.

"Certainly not. If he had he wouldn't be in quite such a mess."

They waited while he lit his pipe again. He didn't hurry. "Branwell came to me first a couple of days before the fire—about the time he called on you, McDonald—and told me all about his suspicions and I told him where to go to get advice on detecting fake pictures and furniture. He put it as a hypothetical case, of course, and we talked it over pretty thoroughly. But I'd no

reason to connect what he said with Louis Manor—either then or later. Nor had I any reason to suppose he contemplated anything as silly as house-breaking."

Dane blew out a stream of smoke and watched it break up and drift away. "After the fire . . . well, after the fire he didn't tell me as much as he might have done, but during the four months that followed we had various conversations, and I gave him advice which I later saw was relative to this case. You blame him for not immediately telling the police of his discovery of the dead body and that the fire was planned. Well, so do I; but it isn't such an open and shut issue as you seem to think. When he discovered the fire—if you accept his word for it—he did all he could. Then, when the brigade came at his call, he had to make a split-second decision whether to stay on or to go. He went, and after that it was too late."

"Too late for what?" said McDonald, breaking his long silence.

"Too late to do any of the orthodox things. Because once he'd left the scene of the fire he'd no proof that he'd ever been there. What sort of evidence could he produce that the fire was deliberately planned? He could talk and ruin himself, and make a lot of trouble; but he hadn't any sort of factual proof—at least not the sort that I have to produce to persuade an underwriter to contest a settlement."

I saw Charles Robinson smile.

Spenser said: "Yes, but—"

"But never mind that. After four months he discovered quite suddenly that Mrs. Tracey Moreton had no hand in it. They met, and he told her what had happened, and without hesitation she agreed the money must be paid back. He came at once to see me—"

"Before their wedding?" asked Mr. Abercrombie.

"Well, of course. . . ."

THAT'S a lie, I wanted to say; but I couldn't without letting Dane down; and, anyway, it wasn't quite a lie.

He was like a man walking across stepping stones; you thought every minute he was going to fall in, but he didn't even get his feet wet.

He explained about the claims on his time, which had prevented him from giving his full attention to my problem until I came back from my honeymoon; how by then the rumour had spread, making it impossible to put the thing in hand.

He made it sound as if the rumour-mongers alone were to blame for Mr. Reckitt not having his £28,000 back in his pocket before now. He told of his advice to me to go to the police and my refusal until I could see my own inquiries through. He ended by saying that I and my wife had succeeded in clearing the mystery up at last, to the satisfaction of the police, and it seemed a poor reward to him that as a result one of us should be in hospital seriously injured and the other out of a job.

When he finished, his pipe had gone



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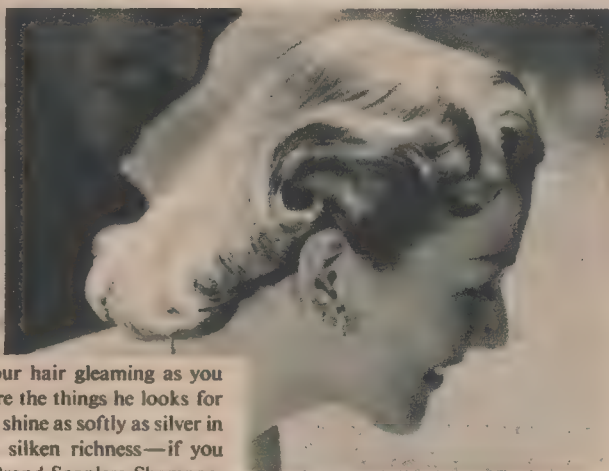
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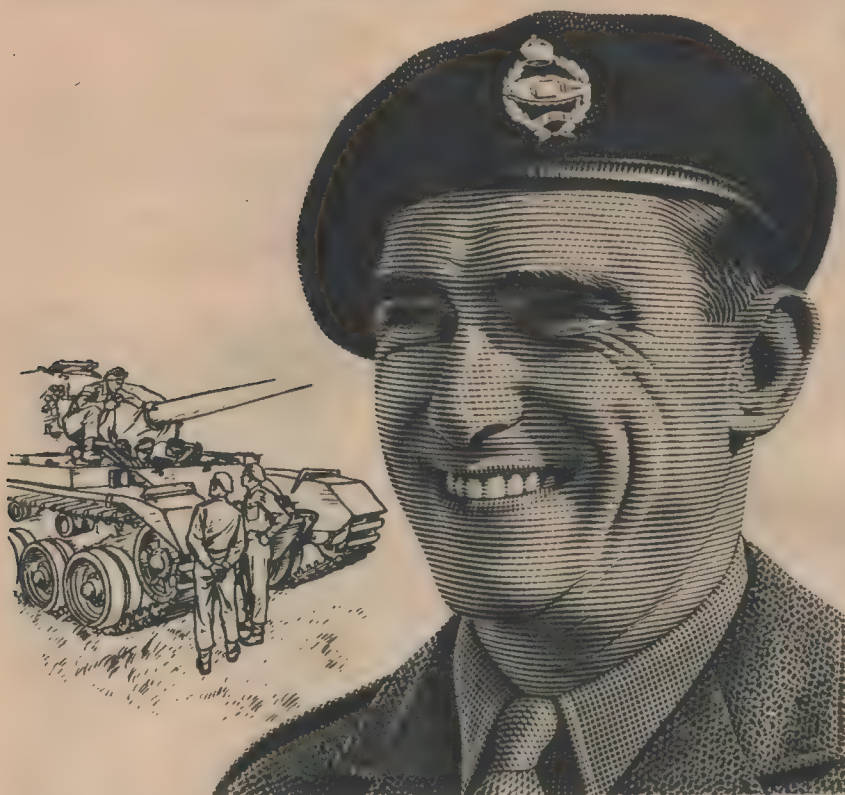
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## SOLDIERS OF THE QUEEN



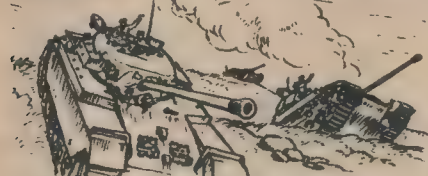
## 'It's a first-rate career!'

says Corporal P. J. Kelly, Royal Tank Regiment

Corporal Kelly likes his job as a Driver Instructor on the huge Centurion tanks—it offers more scope for his mechanical ability than his civilian job



1. D-day! Corporal Kelly fights through to Germany as an armoured car driver. When called-up he naturally chose the Army since his father had served 22 years.



2. Instructing novices to handle a Centurion is no cushy job—but Corporal Kelly likes teaching and his pupils soon acquire the skill needed to control these giants.



3. Now, at 28, Corporal Kelly has a fine Army bungalow for his home, and leisure to work in the garden, play soccer and study. Security for the family means a lot too.

of lorry driver ever did, and it's better paid. He also enjoys the comradeship he missed in civvy street. His mechanical aptitude and keenness passed him out top of his class at Catterick and brought him promotion to Corporal. Corporal Kelly was demobbed in 1947 and rejoined in 1950. Married with two children, he had never been able to find a home as a civilian, but within five months of rejoining the Army he was allotted a modern bungalow. Paying a rent of only 15/6 out of his weekly pay of £8.10.0 he can put some by—enough last year to spend his annual thirty days leave in the south of France! 'If you're keen', he says, 'today's Army really does offer a wonderful career with excellent chances of promotion'.

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out again and he began to unscrew the stem.

As I expected, Reckitt was the next to speak. "You've certainly shown us another side of the picture, Dane. Obligated to you for that, of course. It transforms Branwell's case. All the same I'm a little surprised that a man of your wide experience should go out of his way to excuse what are, after all, still very grave irregularities."

"Oh, I know," said Dane. "He acted like a fool. But that's all."

I was suddenly aware that McDonald was speaking. He'd slumped in his chair, and his double chin looked heavy and gross.

"... since my inquiries began it. What Henry Dane has said—and what Branwell said before him—has cleared up a lot of the perplexities in my mind, and I've certainly no wish to be vindictive. I'm prepared to say I'm entirely satisfied with what I've heard, and I suggest we forget all about this meeting and consider it as never having happened."

It was very handsome of him. It staggered me a bit, and I think some of the others, too. I realized that this was the time I must speak, if I was ever going to speak at all.

"No," I said. "I'm very grateful to McDonald for saying that. I'm very grateful indeed. But it won't do. Ever since May, since the fire, I've been thinking about this; but it's only recently that it's come clear in my own mind. . . . I want to resign, to get things straight with myself again."

Traffic was rumbling outside. Even the Saturday workers were beginning to go.

"When I came out of the army," I said, "I got a chance to go and settle in New Zealand. It's an offer that still stands and I . . . my wife and I want to accept it. That's all I want to say."

SPENSER said, at last: "Well, I don't know what the feeling is, but it doesn't seem to me there's a lot more we can usefully do this morning. Branwell's decision is something he must discuss with Mr. Abercrombie. If he's quite made up his mind to go, as I think he has, well, then it becomes a private matter which is no longer any concern of ours."

"It seems to me that the purpose of this meeting has been fully achieved—not by forcing Branwell's resignation, but by healing a quarrel and by eliciting the full facts of the situation. Personally, speaking as an observer in this, I'd like to say that Mr. Branwell's attitude this morning has left me with the highest opinion of his general integrity, and I'm sure there's no one here who doesn't wish him every success in the new life he has chosen."

Well, that was it. I stood on the corner of Lime Street and Leadenhall Street and watched the thinning trickle

of traffic. In another hour the City would be dead.

It was all very well to talk about the new life I had chosen, but in fact I'd talked a lot more surely than I knew. So far I hadn't seriously discussed it with Sarah.

Also, although it had seemed at the time that I'd come out of it all with credit and advantage, I knew I should always feel I'd left under a cloud.

I TURNED up towards the Bank, where there would be a better chance of a taxi, and someone took my arm. It was Henry Dane.

He said: "Well, my friend, are you satisfied with the morning's work?"

I said grimly: "Are you?"

"No. If I knew you were bent on hara-kiri I shouldn't have wasted my morning's golf."

"Or one of your best defence speeches. Sorry."

"Can I drop you somewhere?"

"No." We walked a few paces then I stopped, determined to say it to him. "Look, Henry, I want to thank you. I don't know why the hell you did it."

"My dear fellow—"

"No," I said, "there's no getting out of it. I shall never forget this. But it wasn't useless, because I did have a chance of abandoning ship in good order instead of being torpedoed."

"Why abandon ship at all? The very fact of your leaving while this rumour's still about—"

"I'm not. At least, not immediately. I'll stay on for a bit—just while things straighten themselves out."

We walked on in silence to the corner of Gracechurch Street. I said: "You think I'm making a mistake, then, in going to New Zealand."

"I think you're making a mistake in not fighting it out here. You've integrity and courage, and a wife who's your equal in both. With her to help you, you can still do practically anything. But not if you scuttle now."

I stared at his lined vigorous face. "Scuttle's not a word I'm fond of."

"I didn't suppose it would be. That's why I used it. My car's down here. I'll say goodbye."

We shook hands and I said: "In any case, thanks again . . . for everything . . . for your help and for your advice. There's a lot about the police side I'd like you to know. I'll see you again."

He smiled. "I think you will. Ask Sarah's opinion on it all. I think you'll find she will agree with me."

"She might."

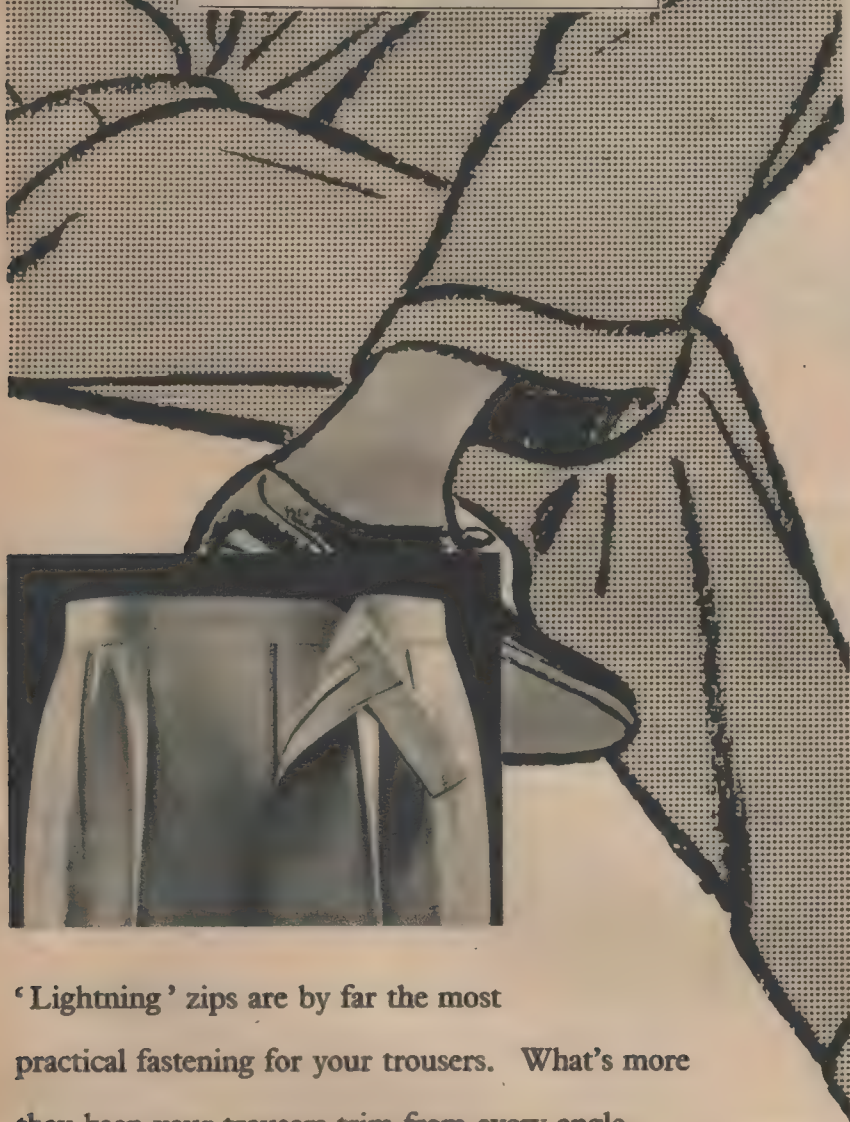
"And she'll be absolutely right."

There was something so confident about his sudden, ugly smile, that when I had left him I began to think he might be, too.

THE END

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said  
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CALVERT**



"THAT's a fact, Miss Calvert," said Cyril Spruce. "This film we're on, 'The Net', makes it ninety-nine. Twenty years of fixing fuses and that."

"Well, you certainly deserve a cigarette after all that."

"Oh, I don't know. So long as I get my smoke in between times, I'm happy enough."

"Me too. After a couple of hours on the set you really need a cigarette, don't you?"

"You're right, Miss. But mind you, I'm fussy. There's some don't mind what they smoke. But me, I'm choosy."

"Well, these are Capstan we're smoking."

"That's what I mean. Seems like you and me got the same idea about cigarettes, Miss."

"You like Capstan too, then?"

"Smoked 'em for donkey's years, I have."

"Since about ninety-nine films ago?"

"Oh, longer'n that even."

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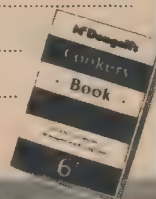
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**COMMANDO!***Continued from page 9*

Giles, calling anxiously from the beach. "Yes," and I told him to get on with forming the men up on the shore. I had landed hard on the rocks and was shaken and bruised, but there was nothing seriously the matter.

I knew now that we were late for our rendezvous—it was ten past three—and that if the destroyers had obeyed instructions they were already steaming towards Britain. I saw the dim shapes of our launches then, about a hundred yards out. "Come in and pick us up!" I shouted.

"Too rough! We've already been bumping on the rocks. We'll stove our bottoms in if we come any nearer."

"Well, send your dinghy in for the weapons."

They did. It was a tiny dinghy, no more than nine feet in length. With each load of weapons, the dinghy took two or three men. As it came in for the fifth run, a high sea picked it up and smashed it against a rock. The dinghy was a total loss.

**Waded Into The Sea**

"The rest of you will have to swim for it," I ordered. Some of the men began peeling off their uniforms and wading into the sea. Three men came up to me in the darkness. One of them, Cpl. Dumper, said: "Could we have a word with you, please, sir?" He seemed a little nervous.

"What is it?"

"I know we should have reported this in Plymouth, sir," he said, apologetically, "but the three of us are non-swimmers."

I was ready to explode. The original letter calling for Commando volunteers had specifically mentioned that they must be able to swim. Then I calmed down. "I'm afraid there's nothing we can do for you except try to send a submarine to pick you up tomorrow night," I said. "You chaps hide up. Come back on the beach at two o'clock and flash a torch."

I removed my tunic and struck out in the water. Some of the men, with more wisdom than modesty, preferred to strip stark naked. I had the added handicap of sentiment. In my right hand I carried a silver cigarette case which my wife had given me; in my left, a spirit flask which had been my father's.

A rough sea had come up since our original landing. Under these circumstances the hundred yards to the launches seemed endless to me. During the first fifty yards breakers thundered over me and broke over my head. It took, I suppose, seven or eight minutes to swim out. It seemed hours.

As a sailor bent down from the launch to drag me aboard, the final

**DOWN YOUR GARDEN***with RICHARD DIMBLEBY***Dustbin lid birdbath**

I MADE this birdbath by raising a bed of soil and pressing a dustbin lid on to it firmly. I then cemented over it (first adding soot and brickdust to tone down the colour), roughed up the surface with a stick and set rock plants and bulbs round it. — Mrs. N. K. GREGG, Horsham.

**Watering seed boxes**

When raising my own plants from seed, I water them through a piece of fine hessian or canvas stretched across the box. This way, the water seeps through gently and does not wash the seeds out, as happens when it falls directly on the soil.—Mrs. E. J. ROBINSON, Deal.

**Broom on the soil**

I have my own method of producing the sort of soil necessary for sowing seeds. After digging and raking, go over the seed plot with a very stiff yard broom. Don't sweep it. Plunge the stiff bristles into the soil and watch them break up those particles into a "fine tilth."—Mrs. ELSIE LEAR, Bournemouth.

Readers are invited to send their own simple, original gardening hints to **DOWN YOUR GARDEN**, John Bull, 189 High Holborn, London, W.C.1. Every week, Richard Dimbleby will make a selection of the best, and John Bull will pay three guineas for each on publication. "Down Your Garden" hints cannot be returned unless they are accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

effort of helping him made me—to my great annoyance—let go of the flask and case. When I was interested again in such matters, I noted that my wrist-watch had stopped. I asked the time. "Half past three," the captain said. "Hell! We'll have missed the destroyers completely."

With dawn half an hour off, it looked as if we should have to head for home in the launches. This was not a bright prospect. The crews of these boats were brave men, but mostly yachtsmen with no Service experience.

At this point, they seemed unable to reach a decision for further action. The second launch had just broken down: ours threw it a line and had it

in tow. There was a general discussion of the situation by all hands. Even the engine attendant left his recess to chip in. This was too much for me. "For heaven's sake," I snapped, "let's stop the talking and pull out to sea." I was sure that by now the Scimitar had gone; and it seemed doubtful that, towing the other launch, we could make it to England—even if we were lucky enough to escape strafing German fighters which could easily nip out from airfields on the French coast. I felt that only a piece of desperate luck could save us.

"May I borrow your torch?" I asked our captain, and he handed it to me. I flashed it out to sea, knowing

that this was a despairing hope. To my delight, a series of answering flashes came back from just beyond the point. The Scimitar's skipper, I later learned, had decided to take one last sweep around for us on his way home!

We transferred to the destroyer after blowing up the ailing launch, and at eight in the morning we arrived back in Dartmouth, safe but distinctly down in the mouth.

It was not until then that I learned what had happened to the Independent Company. Two of their launches, as already noted, had broken down before they reached the Channel Islands. That left them still with two boats. They were not as fortunate, however, as I had been in discovering that the degaussing had reversed the compasses. One of their remaining boats landed blithely on Sark instead of on Guernsey. The other had run into a rock.

I put in an immediate request for a submarine to be sent to pick up Cpl. Dumper, Pte. Ross and Pte. Drain, the three non-swimmers. The authorities, however, declared that the aim was not worth the risk. All three became prisoners of war, together with Gnr. McGoldrick, who had been reported missing when the dinghy capsized.

**Churchill Was Angry**

The raid was, of course, a ridiculous—almost a comic—failure. We had captured no prisoners. We had done no serious damage. We had caused no casualties to the enemy.

On the credit side, we had gained a little experience and had learned some of the things *not* to do. It was very clear that we urgently needed good and reliable landing craft for such an operation. It was equally clear that two hours on shore was not long enough to accomplish any worthwhile aim.

Of course, the Prime Minister—whose promptings had largely initiated the Commando idea—had a complete report of the operation in a few hours. He didn't like it. He sent a strong directive. "Let there be no more silly fiascos like those perpetrated at Guernsey," he wrote. "The idea of working all these coasts up against us by pinprick raids is one to be strictly avoided."

Mr. Churchill was dead right. He meant that we should go about this Commando business properly—or not at all. As for me—I was more than ever determined to mould a unit that would take any raid in its fighting stride, and bring back results. If it meant replacing every officer, every man—that, too, would be done. Only results mattered.

I knew now that I had a long way to go to achieve them.

**NEXT WEEK:** We sharpen our knives in readiness for the Lofoten raid

**THE GIRL WHO LURED MEGGERNIE***Continued from page 11*

stood, one hand on the wheel where she had stopped it, left hand reaching towards the spindle nib. She measured a length of the combed wool, nipped it off, flipped the wheel, stepped back three short steps lightly and took a long one forward. He peered with his sore red eye.

"Spindle's full of yarn," he called at last. "You should reel it on the clock reel."

She marched over, seized the clout and wiped his face with it. "Would you now be ready for some gruel?"

Cool her voice was. Letting him know, and no nonsense about it, that she was in charge of this place. She shook up the quilts, each of which was new to him. She reached in and straightened his legs.

"Woman!" he exclaimed. "You'll no' be disturbing the legs! They are a man's own property!"

She laughed as mother to a bairn, as shepherdess to a lamb. "Then they should not squirm so."

A rare thought struck him. An elegant glimmer. "I'm not drown'd? I'm not in the rocks of the beach? Findochty only broke my back in half and put the boots to me? What did

the murdering giant hit me with? A stone in each fist?"

"I wasn't there to see." She drew his beard out, disentangled it and smoothed it on top of the covers. The whole black fan of it.

A scandalizing image rose to him. "Woman! How long have you had me here, fending for me?"

"Two days and two nights. You've been quite ill."

"'Tis not Christian-decent!" He tried to sit up. Fires raged in his belly.

She laughed calmly. "It had not been Christian nor decent to leave a man on the turf in the rain, the life flowing out of him."

Two nights. Two days. Heaven forgive. He a single man and she a single woman.

"Sit up, now, and eat."

SHE bolstered him with a sack of chaff. Before she could lift bowl to his chin, a dog stormed in and leaped wildly on to the bed.

"Tirry!" he exclaimed. "My Tirry!"

Tirry whimpered for joy at hearing Loth's voice and licked his face.

"When you two are done with the love-making," mentioned Tay Stenness—though there was no hurry in her, as if she knew better than to interfere

between a man and his dog—"I'll wash your face again. And reheat the gruel."

"Out, now, Tirry, and back to the sheep," ordered Loth; and remembered. "Oh, Tirry, they're not our sheep!" But the dog was gone.

"Now," said Tay, wiping him with the clout. "And now," feeding him from the spoon. Bright hair she had, and eyes that weren't afraid of his, though he glowered at her. And the porridge had been cooked at least four hours, which is the understanding way.

"Now you're to sleep." Out came bolster sack from behind his neck, up came covers, and under those quilts dived her hands, rearranging the very shirt-tail of him, which was sore disturbing. And the wheel-whirring started up again, and the stately pacing, and he knew whose wheel it was. His own it had been, until lost to Findochty. This was his own house, or had been up to the day before yesterday. No time had she lost, this sister-in-law of Hargis Findochty, in taking over the beaten neighbour's croft. And for sop, letting its last Meggernie lie in the bed till his hurts were mended.

Many things Loth could stand, but not that. Having his legs dragged and pulled about by a woman neither kith nor kin was bad enough. But, on top

of it, to be peered into by brimming blue eyes full of pity. . . .

"Woman," thundered Loth, "begone from this house, but first gi' me back my breeks! Or does Findochty win those, too? Begone, you parcel from hell, you disher of alms, you pitying, smirking Lizzy!"

Tay stopped spinning. Meggernie sat up furiously. "Get out!" he yelled. She did not speak or move. "Get out, so I can put my trousers on—or I'll set the dog on you!"

She came to the bed and looked down intently into his face. Then she went out proudly and her step was soon unheard.

Loth tried to get up, but fell back sweating. He felt as if he were down in the rocks again.

WHEN he woke, it was from a long drowse and into another day, for he was famished. The porridge over the embers had cooked itself to a cream. Ravenous, he was about to scoop when it occurred to him that he was forgetting his dog. Not a spoonful would he eat until Tirry was here to share. He went to the door to whistle.

But a wooden platter out yonder was heaped with fish and a sheep's knuckle. Someone had thought of Tirry. Charity for himself Loth could spurn, but not

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titbit for his dog. So Loth whistled, and Tirry pounded home and leaped upon the platter. Loth stoked up on his own cookery and felt his strength pour back into him. He could grasp oars, he could row. He and Tirry would be done with Trillick.

He looked round the room for the last time. Though the flowers were wilted and stinking, it was an endearing place.

He picked up his old greatcoat and started to go, but checked in his tracks. He was stayed by an astounding glimmer. He did not want to go alone. Well, he was not going alone. He was going with Tirry.

It wasn't what he meant. This was the most amazing discovery since Adam sat up, felt his sore side and found he had a playmate. Shocked, Loth sat down. He sat there for a couple of hours, and lost the tide doing it.

Towards late afternoon, he lifted his head. He did not want to go; he was afraid to go; afraid of the vast unknown ahead of him. Tay had been out yonder and knew what was beyond Trillick as well as what was here within. Now he had to go to the Findochty house and make known that he, Loth Meggernie, the most shamed and humbled of men, had looked into his heart and needed Tay.

But Hargis, being victor, would start bargaining. Would want to know what Loth would pay for his consent.

ONE more half-hour Loth sat, fingers clenched in hair. The sun went far down towards the wind path on the sea. Gloaming began to muster on Trillick Island. At length the last—and departing—Meggernie on Trillick rose and whistled. Tirry came.

They walked over to the Findochty house. Smoke was curling from its chimney. Loth knew what he had to do. He'd say to Hargis abruptly, before his heartstrings parted, "Don't haggle. The dog is yours. . . . Wrap your things in a cloth, woman, and we'll to the boat. Where we'll row to, God knows; but we'll first to Dunrobin and the minister, and no squeals or skirls of dispute from you, for the tide soon changes—"

The Findochty door was open. Ailsa was at the hearth.

"I've come for her," said Loth. "'Tis my second surrender."

Ailsa eyed him oddly. "Where is Hargis?" asked Loth. "I want to make my deal."

There was a creak of the bed. Loth peered towards it. A hairy red head lay beneath wet clouts. There was a grunt of anguish.

"You had kilt him twice more," charged Ailsa, "had he been any other man. What did you hit him with?"

"I?" said Loth.

"Was it an oar? Or rock? Anyway, 'twas the thrashing of his life he got, and I would not be true wife if I did not rejoice. It will do him good. Have you come to take possession?"

He struggled for understanding. "But I did not beat Hargis! He beat me!"

"Does he look like it?"

"It must have been a draw," said Loth, bewilderment giving way to comprehension. "I have come here only to ask for Tay!"

"Tell this to Hargis," said Ailsa.

Loth went to the bed. He took Hargis's huge fist. "You fought like a man, Findochty. I'm up first only because I had a better nurse."

Findochty's eyes glowered up at him. He went on: "Keep your roof and flock, Hargis, and I'll keep mine. But it's Tay I also want, and there will be no haggle."

There was a murmur from the bed. Ailsa bent to listen. "He says," she interpreted, "you fought fine, too, but where did you have the truncheon hidden, and Tay's all yours if you can catch her and keep her, and thanks for giving us back our croft and flock."

"But, Ailsa, where is Tay?"

"Down by the shore, Meggernie. Looking off toward Dunrobin and weighing you hard against a tall lad over there that long has wanted her. Or maybe, by now, she's putting off in the boat. . . . Loth, won't you first have a bite of supper?"

But Loth was already running for the beach.

THE END



### TOO MUCH LION

Continued from page 22

much lion," he said in English, shaking a gloomy head, and glanced fearfully over his shoulder.

He thought the lions could be baited. It would have to be tried, anyway.

"Pack up," Derwent growled, and the boys threw themselves on the camp. In half an hour they were on their way.

That night Derwent established his new camp in what he considered the heart of the danger area. He went to sleep with the 450/500 beside his bed, and the tent flaps laced up. It was a cold night.

At dawn they made a reconnaissance. The game scouts knew of a waterhole. They would go there first and look for spoor.

THEY were a mile from the camp with its wholly illusory security, in thick thorn bush, when Derwent became aware of something. It was less than thirty yards away, and it had risen from the cover of a dense tangle of thorn scrub. He looked at it, and for a moment he was quite calm, because he had looked into the eyes of lions before. But the moment passed. He was looking into a very different pair of eyes this time, and he knew very well what was going on behind those eyes.

He was out to kill, not just to watch and make notes. The lion would sense that. It seemed to him that the very trees shouted aloud his intense desire to kill, that this malignity was in the very air, a malignity emanating from himself, who never before had felt anything but a friendly interest in any animal.

He could see the movement of the grass as the beast's tail swished from side to side, and suddenly the tail was erect. At the same moment he heard a gasp and the thud of footsteps and knew without looking around that Maroni was gone.

He threw up the .265 he carried—Maroni had the heavy rifle. He took aim for the briefest fraction of a second as the huge tawny form rose in the air in a mighty bound.

He fired. Once. The crack of the shot was contained by the bush, thrown back into his ears. The sweet, smooth movement of the rifle-butt against his shoulder was comforting in that split second. Then Derwent sat down.

The rifle lay on the ground. His hands hung limply between his knees, his head was light and empty, his sight blurred. He made an effort and raised his head and looked. The great beast was not two yards away, at full stretch, its

immense head twisted awkwardly as it had fallen. A neat hole appeared between the eyes.

There was a sound behind him. Maroni was coming back. Derwent jumped up.

"Where the hell have you been, Maroni?" he demanded.

Maroni grinned ingratiatingly. Derwent knew he ought to give him a good hiding. Maroni expected it. The game scouts, coming up now that they realized it was all over, and pretending they hadn't run, too, expected it. They stood waiting for him to wade into Maroni.

"Next time you're not here when I want you, Maroni," Derwent said, "I'll fine you ten bob. See?" Then he walked away quickly. He was shaking himself. How could he blame Maroni? He was scared out of his wits himself.

He headed back to camp, leaving the boys to bring in the skin, and he sat down and thought. That was one lion less. Six, maybe eight to come. And maybe he wouldn't have the same luck again. He might put out bait night after night, sit up waiting and never get a shot. Or miss in the dark. Or wound and have to follow, in daylight, into thick bush. No. He wasn't doing that. Not for all the provincial commissioners in creation. Not for the whole of Whitehall. Not even for the Ruwengara job.

He thought about that. A fat chance he had of getting it, anyway. No damn' good, he thought. Not a bit. Molly'll be fed up. She thinks I'm a coward. She knows I'm a failure. No matter what happens now. . . .

HE was in bed when the idea came to him. It came to him because he heard, suddenly, the low, grunting cough of a lion on the prowl. Several miles away, probably, but the fact that it might be a man-eater made those miles seem very short. Made those coughs sound right in his ear.

Tonight it might kill. If it did, he'd hear about it soon enough. But a beast that preyed on men would be a very different animal from one that preyed on small game. It would be cunning, watchful, adept—a past-master at stalking, at skulking, at camouflage and ambush. A man would have to—

He sat up. He was sweating all over at the idea that had come to him. Involuntarily, he shuddered. It wasn't any good trying clever little bits of bait with a beast like that. It wasn't interested in that sort of bait at all. . . . He lay back, but he did not sleep.

In the morning he got busy. He sent orders to all the village headmen and

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local chiefs. When a kill occurred all the men of the village were to take torches and go in a body and drive the lion off the kill, and wait there by the body until he arrived. They were to sound drums immediately, and go on drumming until he came. Drums were not to be used after dark for any other purpose. No dances, no beer drinks, no singings, no high jinks. This was serious.

Then he gave new orders for the camp. That night they kept awake, all of them. It was an oddly still night. No sound from any village within earshot. No laughing, no singing, no drumming. Silence. A frightened, frightening silence, a menacing, malignant silence. Except for, far away, the coughing of a lion, looking for meat.

A WEEK passed. It was a week of suspense, of inaction, of frayed nerves. But the suspense was broken at last. He heard it just before midnight.

It was no more than a pulse beat at first, a faint throbbing. A minute later it became much louder, as it was picked up and relayed from somewhere closer at hand.

He took the 450/500 and strode out into the dark clearing. Figures rose beside the fire, moved swiftly towards him, dark figures. He could feel their tension, their fright, their reluctance. They set off.

It took them two hours—two hours of thorn bush, trackless, making in a beeline for that throbbing. They arrived with their clothes in rags and tatters, their faces, their arms, their legs gashed and bleeding from the thorns. The village was astir. Terrified women, wailing children, the headman waiting for him, inarticulate with excitement and fright. Derwent growled at his boys, telling them to shut up, as the women came crowding round, chattering at them. The boys stood there in the light of the fires, their chests

## OH, JOHNNY!



heaving, mouths hanging open as they gasped for breath, their eyes still rolling with the terror of those two hours in the night-bound bush.

"Fetch hoes," Derwent said, curtly, to the headman, and went on. More than half a mile from the village he found the huddle of men, the flaming torches, the eyes goggling into the darkness—ready to cut and run. Some of them carried rifles. Derwent hated to think they might be loaded. There were hazards enough.

In the lurid glare of the torches he saw the body, crumpled on the ground. He strode up to it. A young man, dead.

"Dig," he ordered. "Dig a pit."

In half an hour it was large enough for his purpose. Derwent stood looking down into it. A grave. His grave. He was a damned fool. He'd asked for this.

He jumped down into it, and squatted down, holding the 450/500 with the muzzle resting on the ground above the pit.

Maroni handed him the .265. He shot the breach, let off the safety catch and laid the rifle beside him.

"Cut brushwood," he ordered, and told them his plan: they must cover him with the brushwood.

When they were done, there was nothing to be seen, except the pile of brushwood and the glint of the rifle muzzle protruding from it.

"Now go home," Derwent said from

the pit. "Come back when you hear a shot. Understand?"

They understood. They went with relief.

Derwent settled down. He was already feeling cramped, imprisoned.

He must be still. The dead man's scent would kill his own. But dead men don't make sounds. There was a corpse three feet from his face. Three feet. A man who'd been killed by a lion. The lion he was waiting for. The lion that would come back for his supper. . . .

His tense ear caught a stealthy movement. It was a mere whisper of sound. Then a snuffling, and a scrunch. A horrible, ghastly scrunch of teeth in flesh. A man's flesh, being torn to pieces three feet from his own face. He knew this was a hyena. His stomach heaved.

The sound stopped suddenly. Then a faint scuffle, silence. The hyena, a mere ghost, vanished. A different, darker shape took its place.

DERWENT, peering, could distinguish only the dim bulk. He did not need to distinguish more. Something had caught hold of him inside. A band of cold steel round his stomach, pressing tighter and tighter. Then a nerve came to life, jumping and fluttering in his arm with the tension. He strove to keep the rifle barrel rock-steady.

His breathing was congested. He

tried to hold it. He could hear the lion's breathing. The beast bestrode the corpse. The appreciative sniffing sent a new sort of shudder through him. Then the beast lowered its head, and a purring rumbled in the great chest. It was the most horrible sound Derwent had ever heard. His thumb made sure the safety catch was off. The muzzle was within eighteen inches of the beast. All right, Molly. All right, old girl. We'll see who's yellow. Now for it.

He squeezed the trigger.

He thought his shoulder was broken. The concussion, with the heavy rifle held in numbed hands, was terrific. It was a momentary ache, but it served to detach him from the seconds that followed. The night, the dark, silent night, was convulsed. The ground shook, the sky seemed riven by the uproar. Something smacked clean through the barrier of brushwood and hit his cheek. A human arm. A convulsive thrashing of one immense hind paw had torn it from its socket and pitched it clean at him. He brushed his face with his hand and crouched there, then he let the rifle slide back until the butt rested on the cold earth beside his knees. He was kneeling. His mouth was open, gasping for breath, his lips were dry, his tongue felt swollen. His hands began trembling violently.

There was no sound. He knelt, and as he knelt he turned cold, so cold that

by TIM

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finding his subject. This is sometimes difficult. Clients give directions in various ways and none is infallible. Usually, the most reliable directions are those given over the telephone with the order, but even these may be misleading. A shipowner once asked for his ship to be photographed when it was loading stone on the next day's high tide from a jetty at Penmaenmawr, North Wales. Soames found the time of high tide from the tide table, took the photograph and sent on a print. A few days later, an irate letter arrived from the owner: "This is not my ship. Mine was loading four miles north."

Soames was pretty sure of avoiding the same mistake when a client who wanted a sewage farm photographed kindly provided a map of the district. Over the area, he was surprised by the difficulty of finding the farm, but he got his picture and posted off the prints. They came back by return.

"You've taken the wrong sewage farm," wrote the client. "Mine is half a mile away." Soames was justifiably puzzled. He later found that the map was twenty years out of date, and the courses of a canal and river had since been changed.

## They Expected To Crash

One public board gave a list of towns in which a number of easily identifiable installations were situated. Soames found all but one. Three times he circled that particular town, even checking his position by going low enough to read the name on the railway station. "I'm pretty sure the installation doesn't exist," he says.

Yet another trap was a recent, though somewhat smudgy, photograph submitted by a publicity organization, to help Soames to find a farm. The only other instruction was that the farm was fifteen miles south east of a certain Welsh town, and on the way to another Welsh town, fifty miles away.

For three-quarters of an hour, Soames and his pilot quartered the area, which was in the heart of the mountains. A thunderstorm broke. Visibility fell to nil. Every minute they expected to crash into a mountainside. Finally, the sky cleared and they managed to find an unusually shaped slab of rock which corresponded to an unusually shaped smudge on the photograph. They were then able to photograph the farm under ideal conditions.

"It's best after a thunderstorm or during rain with a strong wind blowing, because the air is clearest then," says Soames. Under these conditions, he can see from fifty to sixty miles if he goes high enough.

For a rough and ready weather check, Soames glances through his studio window to see if he can make out, between the trees in Cardiff Castle grounds, a spur of the Caerphilly mountains, five miles away. If this is obscured, aerial photography is impossible. On doubtful days, he rings Cardiff Airport for both general and local forecasts.

## Plane Flies On Its Side

The three technical problems which an aerial photographer has to solve are distance, haze and the high speed of the plane. Distance and haze are eliminated by choosing the right day and using a light yellow filter. To counteract the speed of the plane, Soames uses the fastest film he can get, and a shutter speed of 1-300th of a second.

His camera is an ex-government model weighing thirty pounds, a fact which causes pilot Martin a certain amount of worry. When Soames is taking a vertical shot, with the plane completely on its side, Martin is directly over him and yells at him not to let the camera drop. "If it did, it might kill two or three people."

He is perhaps thinking of the time he was asked to fly the camera to Haverfordwest, when Soames was taking photographs of the fishing fleet at Milford Haven. He left the camera lying in the bottom of the plane just behind the pilot's seat. Suddenly, he ran into a thunder-cloud and hit an air pocket. The plane dropped many feet, and the camera leapt up and tore a hole in the canopy. "I was lucky it didn't knock me out," Martin says. "It

would have been another of those unexplained accidents."

One of the few jobs Soames has had to turn down was a request for a photograph of the lights at Torquay. The necessary time exposure was impossible, and, in any case, Cardiff Airport is not equipped for night flying. Nor does his firm attempt aerial surveys in which many thousands of square miles are photographed by squadrons of planes flying set courses at set speeds, with automatic cameras taking shots at predetermined intervals. Colour photography is also difficult because the five and a half inch square film which he buys in lengths of forty-seven feet is unobtainable in colour. Instead, black and white views are hand-coloured from notes made on the spot.

## M.I.5 Stopped His Work

It has taken Soames twenty-three years to learn the possibilities and limits of aerial photography. It was in 1929 that he flew over the Nile delta at six o'clock one morning and took his first aerial photograph with a cheap box camera. He still has a print, with others taken over Cairo and Heliopolis. At that time he was an engineering cadet attached to an R.A.F. station in Egypt, "and experimenting all the time."

In 1933, he was demobilized and worked with a photographic artist in Manchester for two years while he studied at the Manchester College of Art. Later, he went into partnership and concentrated on industrial and commercial work. A month before the war started, officials of M.I.5 called and said that all aerial photography was off.

Soames joined the merchant navy as an engineer officer, and after being torpedoed was posted to the Merchant Navy School at Cardiff as an engineering instructor. There he remained until the end of the war. In 1945, he went into business in Cardiff as an aerial and industrial photographer, chartering planes for aerial jobs as he required them. Later, he sold out to the firm for which he now works on a salary plus share of the profits basis.

As a wartime instructor, Soames found that his students could get much more out of an engineering drawing if they also had an actual photograph with which to compare it. To obtain these, he was granted a special pass which allowed him to take photographs of the engine-room of every ship that docked at Cardiff. Today he takes many aerial photographs for students studying geography, history, geology, town-planning and architecture. His firm is building up a comprehensive topographical series for use in schools.

## Weather May Spoil Trip

For educational work, the charge is usually five shillings a print, which does not cover costs. Commercial clients pay fifteen guineas for prints of three alternative shots. Extra prints cost more. Film costs £4 a roll, aircraft maintenance £10 a week. The Auster Autocrat burns up petrol at the rate of a twenty horse-power car. Personal accident insurance for Soames and the pilot costs £15 a year and special insurance on the plane a further £90. The plane has to undergo regular inspections, minor after ten flying hours, major after fifty.

A further expense, not charged to the customer, is the cost of fruitless trips when, after a journey to North Wales or London, with official promises of good weather, conditions on the spot make photography impossible.

To save running costs, Soames plans his trips so that he takes as many subjects as possible. During a single afternoon's flying, he may cover thirty assignments. To bring down costs, and in an attempt to get new business, he takes shots of any subject on his route if there is the slightest chance of selling them.

With most people, pride of ownership is so strong that he can be almost certain of selling shots of country houses, ships at sea and new factories. Even when the speculative shots are not wanted themselves, commissions for new shots often follow. But in speculative shooting, Soames has to be careful to avoid factories, power

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